

How To Select Mail Order Products That Sell

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How To Select Mail Order Products That Sell

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"HOW TO SELECT MAIL ORDER PRODUCTS THAT SELL

Almost anything that people want or need is today being successfully sold by mail. In fact, some propositions could not be handled in any other way. The problem is to figure out the product or service and then find and develop a market. Within the wide range of items sold by mail, there are things especially suited to limited sale operations. The question is not so much "What can be sold by mail" as it is, "What can I sell by mail?"

In choosing a line a person may already have a product and be seeking an outlet or additional market; or he may like the idea of selling by mail and be looking for something to offer.

A prospective mail order operator is fortunate if he has a commodity which he can grow, make or otherwise readily acquire, and wishes to build a business on this foundation. Good advice is: "Sell products you like to handle." for example, there may be something in your community or vicinity which with a little effort you can make up into useful materials or gadgets. For a long time you may have been wondering if the proposition has possibilities. Find out. There are a number of mail order counselors with whose names you will become acquainted in the mail trade publications, and who at small cost will advise you as to the practicality of the proposed venture. Competent advise may enable you to explore and develop a business based on your pet idea.

Even a commonplace article can be sold to advantage when promoted with a sound merchandising plan, especially when given a new twist. Ordinarily it is not the item that makes a successful operator, but the selling plan coupled with the energy and determination behind it.

HINTS ON SELECTION

Assuming that you do not have anything in particular to offer by mail, how would you go about finding a suitable line? Even if you get all the general information and leads you can about likely products and marketing methods, you yourself will have to choose the line. No one can tell you what you would care to sell. One

pitfall into which mail order aspirants often fall is in looking for the "perfect" article to sell by mail. There are many propositions which could be developed into profitable mail order enterprises that are either overlooked or being half heartedly offered.

In making your selection, pick out something not too common. Furthermore, the proposition must permit a good margin for expenses and profit. There should be an element of the unusual about it, and preferably you should have control over its manufacture and merchandising. As one counselor states, "The real successes in mail order are those who own and operate their own exclusive set-up or mail order proposition. Plan your own."

In general mail order propositions fall into these types:

1. The sale of merchandise.
2. The sale of "information."
3. The sale of personal services.

SELLING MERCHANDISE

Staple merchandise sold in competition with retail stores usually will have a low gross margin of profit. For this type of merchandise, people turn to buying by mail usually because they believe they can save money. It is preferable to handle something not found in stores, something that does not weigh much and offers good value, in order to satisfy and hold customers. It is well to know that businesses which thrive on one and only one item are few and far between.

A startling new invention is not required to build a profitable business. If you want to sell goods, select a line you would take pleasure in promoting, pick out a "lead" article, play it up in your advertising, create demand for it by calling attention to its uses and what these could mean to the customer. That is the way successful merchandising is done.

SALE OF BOOKS AND MANUALS. The book business lends itself nicely to mail selling. Only limited stock needs to be carried, with no breakage or spoilage, and a special mailing rate not extended to any other product is available.

"How-to-do-it" and self help books are very popular. Also, encyclopedias, dictionaries, books of fiction, history and literature, besides titles on such topics as religion, physical culture, technical subjects, "rare" or collectors' items are being successfully sold, by mail alone or as supplementary to retail store sales. It is preferable, however, for a beginner to try the marketing of one or more self help books and later expand by adding to his line.

SALES OF SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT. The hobbies, small craftsman, and the home worker, all purchase materials and supplies to

facilitate the making of articles for resale or pleasure. In the main, these people need inexpensive supplies and equipment, in small quantities. Most of their orders would be small, but of a repeat nature. Moreover, these people often hesitate to try dealing with the large suppliers, who after all do not generally cater to limited quantity users. Getting intimately acquainted with a field of operation, discovering what is required in small enterprises, and preparing to supply one or more of these needs is an excellent plan for getting started in the mail order business.

SALE OF OFFICE SUPPLIES. Begun in a very limited way, some projects of this kind have climbed into the big business classification, and the door is still open. A ready market exists for small quantity sales of stationery, printing, postal scales, filing and indexing equipment, especially goods simply and inexpensively constructed. Since demand does not have to be created for many of such products, selling is not too difficult, once the buyers are located. Often a postal card, and attractively printed announcement, will do the missionary work.

HOUSEHOLD SPECIALTIES. These are good sellers if not so common as to be had at convenient corner or downtown stores. Those interested in chemical preparations are faced with an analogous situation. A product can be compounded and put up under a distributor's private label by a manufacturing chemist, often at lower prices than an individual could realize when buying in limited quantities at wholesale.

AUTOMOBILE SPECIALTIES. Special washing and polishing aids, automobile "Beauty Packs" (an assortment of car beautifiers), touch-up and car-painting helps, seat covers, motor and body accessories, parts and attachments. All of these are good mail order items when advertised properly.

COMMODITIES OF YOUR OWN MAKE

There are many items easy to make simply by following instructions. In other cases, once construction fundamentals are grasped, plans can be worked out to make a variety of articles of your own design, for example, useful novelties that will be yours exclusively.

Mail order goods of your own manufacture fall in two principal groups: 1. Goods made by the artisan or craftsman, by hand with simple tools or with the aid of light power machinery, as for example, book ends, indoor dog kennels, knock-down furniture, wall racks, seashell necklaces, lawn novelties, throw rugs, tropical products, etc. 2. Chemical specialties which any "mixer" can learn to compound at home, on the kitchen stove, in a small shop or in his garage. This is the so called

proprietary field, where the making and selling of simple products has crowned the efforts of many limited capital operators with success.

In starting out, pick something in demand which is easy to manufacture, and if possible choose a repeat article or a "line" of products so that the sale of one item can be used to introduce others. Proprietary manufacture offers a wide margin of profit, the container sometimes costing more than the contents, and yet the compound can be competitively priced. Sometimes common products go well, when promoted with a "new angle."

SELLING INFORMATION BY MAIL-ORDER

Selling instruction and information by mail embraces a large field. At one extreme is the correspondence school which aims to bring a university campus to the door, and at the other extreme is the small operator who, for a dollar or two, will send information about something you like to know or will reveal a "secret" formula of some kind. In between these two extremes are many possibilities. Those individuals who are conscious of mail-buying opportunities, and who seek training at home and in spare time will discover many pieces of useful information to be had at small cost. Mail order operators who specialize in selling bits of education are in a socially desirable enterprise, and a well managed one can produce very profitable and satisfying results.

Little wonder then that for the small operator, selling of "information" is attractive. One authority states: "At least 50 percent of all beginners start their career in mail order by offering a plan, formula or information sheet. At least 49 percent lose money in their first venture. Some quit then and there because their visions of fast, easy money are shattered. Others realize their mistakes, profit by their experience and go on to a successful, profitable mail order business."

HOW TO GET STARTED. An excellent way to get started in selling information is to push what you yourself have written. By having several hundred or several thousand copies made, you can, at small cost, try out the plan. With the right mail selling methods, you may profit, just as many others are doing. In this field the buyer usually gets good value in obtaining something which required days, weeks, or even months to prepare, and there is a long gross profit on each sale. Treatises which sell for \$5.00 to \$10.00 and sometimes higher usually cost approximately 10 cents to 75 cents to print.

There are many spare-time operators making money year after year in "how-to" courses. The classified columns and display advertising sections of the craft magazines are replete with such offerings.

SELLING FORMULAS. Formulas alone are difficult to sell. Value lies not entirely in the formula, recipe, kink or knack of getting some results, but also in the plan and the person pushing the process or formula. Well permented with instructions for using, formulas singly or in group sets in treatise form are being successfully sold by mail. Many of them can be built around simple household preparations. In selling a plan, a formula and the like, work out a set-up of your own and merchandise it in a way to build a satisfied clientele.

If you have imagination and vision, mail order enterprise provides a chance to sell your knowledge. Many people possess information for which others would willingly pay a fair price. If you have a special field in which you have reason to believe others would be interested, write up an instruction sheet or folio about it. Information, instruction, or education by mail can be started with a minimum capital, with little mailing costs. Further, it is an easy way to get started, and is one of the most profitable areas of mail order selling.

SELLING SERVICE

Persons qualified in a trade or profession are often able to market their services by mail, very frequently in a part-time basis to supplement regular employment. Here are some typical illustrations:

1. Stenographic and clerical:
 - (a) addressing and circular mailing
 - (b) typing of manuscripts (sometimes with revision & editing)
2. Assistance in publication work:
 - (a) writing of sales literature and information folios
 - (b) editorial aid to authors, photoplay writers, and businessmen
 - (c) printing, mimeographing, multigraphing, photo-copying
3. Skilled trade and professional services:
 - (a) photographic work (as development of films)
 - (b) commercial art work
 - (c) patent attorneys (assistance in securing a patent and rendering of service in the marketing of a new invention)
 - (d) analytical chemistry (consultant chemists specialize in analyzing products and suggesting improvements, including better marketing policies)
 - (e) economic advisors, as in the line of tax relief, especially helpful to smaller industrial corporations
 - (f) advertising writers, who help business concerns and advertising problems
 - (g) mail order counselors, catering to beginners, also small mail dealers who wish to perfect their methods and expand
4. News and information services:

- (a) current information bulletins and special releases, put out by specialized reporters situated in a strategic center
- (b) market analysis reports in investment and commodity fields
- (c) syndicated materials, as a column for newspapers