

# How To Sell Information By Mail

Selling information by mail is one of the most profitable business operations in this country today. And you can start a small business for yourself--and make it flourish.

You don't have to be a writer or have experience in running a business. All the steps in setting up a mail order business for yourself are simple, easy to follow,, and may reap a steady second income for you, even building up a highly profitable full-time enterprise.

Tired of reporting to work every day? Frustrated that you can't afford the extras that you want from life? The advantages of your own business are endless. but most of all, you have a feeling of accomplishment and fulfillment, as you help other people acquire the knowledge they want--AND WILL PAY FOR.

You don't need to give up anything. All the tips given in the following pages require minimum expense, can be done at home, and need only a small , but constant, amount of your time.

What you do need is the desire to MAKE IT WORK. If you have perseverance to follow through, and the discipline to complete each of the steps, and you're well on your way to creating something special for yourself.

## WHY SELL INFORMATION?

Bookstores nowadays cater only to mass market books and paperbacks; record stores carry only popular recording artists. Where can you get information on a specific topic? Even specialized magazines are limited in their scope and the information they cover.

You can order items by mail in the safety and privacy of your own home.. You don't have to shop around at the stores, wasting time and gasoline. And, you have a direct connection with the seller of the information, often being able to write specific questions and getting feedback--especially with newsletters and courses.

Mail order at home provides a HIGH PROFIT MARGIN. Producing written or recorded information is inexpensive compared to the price you can receive. You can operate with a low overhead, the business is simple to run,,, and there is no middle seller. Check come DIRECTLY TO YOU.

## WHAT CAN I SELL?

Successful people achieve because they know something special. And specialized knowledge and "how to" are the most sought-after types of information successfully sold by mail order. There is an endless need for specialized information that you

probably have on hand, or can easily obtain... It offers the inside knowledge and ideas that many people need, but you don't have to be an expert to produce and sell that information. Specialized information may be anything from a favorite set of recipes to a list of the fastest horse tracks in the country. It can include places to visit, such as back roads, country inns or fine restaurants in an area.. Or it can be reliable sources for special goods. and tidbits of information about special subject. "How to" can be anything from making cornhusk dolls to finding a good place for camping and hiking.. It can be plans, instructions or tips on how to make something, or find a special place, or achieve a special goal.. It may pertain to sports, hobbies or self-improvement. Or it may relate directly to the hundreds of specialty publications such as skiing, decorating, or writing songs.

### YOU HAVE IMAGINATION

Information is not limited to books and cassettes. It comes in many forms. Something sold for a little money and only a few pages might be plans or directions.. A short piece (up to 50 pages) may be a report, manual, folio or pamphlet.

Later, if you get into multiple printing, photo illustrations, and many items to offer, you might produce brochures, catalogs, booklets, or directories.

If you're really good at what you do,, you might even start a newsletter or correspondence course, both of which can earn a great deal of money and provide ongoing income for years.

Think about what you might have to offer, and how much commitment you want to make... Maybe you want to prepare a short report, make a few photocopies and test the results. Or maybe you are prepared for a larger project such as a book or a series of cassettes.

### YOU KNOW SOMETHING SPECIAL

Because your life is unique, you have knowledge and experience that is helpful to others. You have encountered and accomplished thousands of tasks that you have taught to friends, children or work associates. What's sometimes hard for another person might be easy for you, and that's why you've lent a helping hand.

It is this information, this **SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE**, that sells at a large profit.

What have you taken a special interest in? You probably do several unusual things well. Do you know how to make something that relatives think is great? Have you read a specific subject for years--as a pet interest? Maybe there's something that you would like to look into, find out about and share, something that other people are looking into too.

Stuck for an idea? You can generate your own ideas.. Think about what you could write about as you go through your day. You know something special at work.. You may cook a delicious recipe.. You

may know how to fix things easily.

Look through magazine racks and bookstores for ideas. There's always something you "always wanted to know about." Try the library and the yellow pages for sources. Talk to your family and friends. Encourage yourself.

## WHO WILL BUY?

Take a book in the classified ads section of your favorite is offered? Watch the repeats. Ads which offer the same materials month after month are winners.

You can be a winner too. You can easily produce and sell information in the form of short reports or longer booklets and make the same profit as these others.

Take a look at the price. Invest a little and write away for some of the materials similar to what you want to do. What do you like? What would you avoid?

Analyze your potential customer. What does that person expect? The same as you. You are perfect example of your own customer. And although you're willing to pay for special information that's inexpensive to reproduce, you expect YOUR MONEY'S WORTH. That's what makes repeat business and turns potential into real money.

## YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY

Your enthusiasm will show. The amount of pleasure you get from the topic will come through the pages of the report. Go ahead--be creative. But get the facts straight.

Write what you know about.. It must be original and unique. You should have something different to offer, something important to say, especially if you write about a well-known subject.

## PREPARING A MANUSCRIPT IS EASY

After you have chosen a topic and decided on the approximate length, now what? You don't need to become a world authority on your subject, but you must research it.

Read several booklets or reports similar in format and subject matter. Compare the type of information and the depth of research.. You might want to subscribe to the magazine pertaining to the topic (you may already). And of course, talk to others who can give you input.

Keep moving. You can begin writing as you research so you don't get caught in the bog of details. Prepare a basic outline or a list of the points you wish to cover, and write them out.

You can write. Don't be afraid--you have no one grading you.. You have the ability to put ideas down on paper in a logical sequence that makes sense to other people. That's it. It is that easy.

## CAN SOMEBODY HELP?

At any stage of the writing process you can hire somebody to help... A "ghostwriter" can prepare manuscript from your idea and outline.. An editor can polish even the roughest copy into full, complete prose. Even a good typist can take rough copy,, punctuate it, and make it more readable.

All of these people can be found by placing a small ad in the newspaper or from the classifieds in writers magazines. You'd be surprised--it doesn't cost that much and you won't have to agonize over the manuscript.

## TIPS ON WRITING

If you can write a letter, you can write a short report. In fact, that's the best strategy--as though you're writing to a friend.

What you offer is basically sound, friendly advice or instructions in the form of information.

But be careful to always assume the basic intelligence of your reader--don't talk down to him.. Although you are giving someone new information, that person can, and usually does, know a great deal about the subject.

The best writing is clear, easy to read, and follows an understandable sequence.. Be careful not to meander or repeat. Each idea or separate point should have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Use subheads to break up the blocks of writing and write short paragraphs and simple sentences. This is not a contest for best prose, but be sure to use the basic rules of grammar and punctuation.

Since you can't rely on a person understanding your drawing of plans, chart or graph, talk about what it means. Be sure to include helpful information, tips, or any keys to reading illustrations. Again, you don't have to be an artist to draw a simple "stick figure" picture, as long as it's clear and explains what you want to convey.

You must have something to say. Reread your manuscript and scrutinize it to be sure you have something valuable to offer.

That's a basic key to success in selling information.

The standard manuscript form is typed, double spaced with side and top margins of about 1 1/2 inches and at least a 1-inch margin at the bottom.. If you are not an expert typist or don't have an excellent quality typewriter, hire someone to complete the finished copy. It's not expensive and is absolutely necessary, since **THAT IS YOUR PRODUCT.**

## GO SLOWLY AT FIRST

You have your manuscript and you're ready for printing... Don't go to the expense of professional volume printing--not yet.

Investigate your local "instant press" printers. Photo offset is very inexpensive and efficient way to reproduce copies from several hundred to several thousand.

If you want to test a few dozen at first, even photocopies are

reasonable in price. Since you have a clean manuscript, the copies will be clear and easy to read--a product to be proud of.

## WHAT ABOUT CASSETTES?

Prerecorded cassettes are an excellent way to sell information by mail. And there's a large profit in these too! Drivers listen to cassettes while commuting and sales managers use them to follow up on seminars and meetings.. With all the sound equipment available and in use today, recorded information is in great demand.

You'd be surprised how inexpensive it is to record and mass duplicate cassettes for your business of selling information. First, you must have a prepared manu-script to read from,, and you should get someone with a pleasant speaking voice do the actual recording.

Because you need only the speaking quality recording tape, you can purchase cassettes in quantity at a very low price. Cassettes are available from bulk load-ing companies in any length to match the exact minutes of recorded informa-tion. That way there's no blank tape at the end, which is amateur and wastes money.

You can use a good tape recorder at home to record you information, but it should have a clear excellent sound, with no static or interference. Of course, be sure to eliminate background noises that will detract from the recording. remember, this is a business, and your product must be high quality. Later, when the orders roll in,, you can go into a recording studio to produce the finest quality recording.

High speed duplicating services will mass produce tapes for you at a very reasonable price... Investigate quality and compare costs before you commit yourself.

Like printed matter,. cassettes are easily mailed.. You should purchase cases to go with the cassettes that are being sent out. Later you can even have cassette insert cards printed up to achieve a fine looking product.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

To protect you rights against anyone else using what you've published, you copyright the material. Both printed and recorded materials can be copyrighted.

Don't worry about unpublished manuscripts they are protected against unauthorized copying.. But as soon as you send information out to the public, it is public domain unless it carries a copyright notice.

The notice may appear in one of three forms: the word "copyright," "copr.," or the letter "C" with a circle around it. It must appear on the title page and must include the name of the owner and the year it was published.

Once you publish you work, send tow copies with the proper applications and fess to the U.S. Government Library of Congress.

This will insure the copyright.

For information, write to the Register of Copyrights. The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20559.

## RUNNING THE BUSINESS

The best thing about the information selling business is that it requires so little to start and maintain. You need only a small portion of your home to work in, with a work surface and a few common stationery supplies.

Do you want to use your own name or create a company name? Both have advantages that can work for you, but it's essentially what feels right.. If you choose a company name, check the state laws to be sure you comply with any registration necessary.

If you are thinking about using a post office box number instead of your own address, don't. Because of the number of mail order frauds and the buyers' general skepticism, a street address offers a real place with a real person living there rather than a fly-by-night post box operation.

You'll need sharp looking letterhead stationery, envelopes and mailing labels.. And, you don't have to spend a fortune for elaborate printing on high quality paper. If you have any artistic ability, you can create your own logo and type with press-on letters available at art stores.

You don't need to have a drawing for your log-simply the first letter of your last name or the initials of the company will do... A local printer can advise you about the different type styles available for letterhead.

Be cautious when you order the letterhead and check the price differences among grades of paper and added copies for using a color rather than black or using two colors. Embossing costs more, as do special sizes of envelopes.

Stick with standard sizes and clear, standard type black type gives the illusion of two color printing and looks smart.

Photo offset printers can produce five hundred to a thousand sheets of clean printing for little cost if you supply the finished prototype.

As you get rolling in the business, you will find a high quality postal scale and meter can save you postage costs and the extra trips to the post office..

Books and printed matter can be mailed at a special postal rate.

Each order should be marked: Special 4th Class Book Rate.

However, for light materials, a few cents worth it to fulfill a prompt response.

## SELLING WHOLESALE

You don't have to publish your own writing or ideas to run a profitable information selling business. It 's easy to make a connection with many wholesale book companies distributing by mail. Often these wholesale booksellers can supply catalogs, or

at least supply basic copy for you to make your own. You can also distribute someone else's materials. Of course, you have to pay royalties, but there's no overhead in preparation. Remainder lots of books are available from major publishers. Don't worry if these books didn't sell in bookstores. HOW you market the books is as important as what is in them... These publishers usually dictate the retail cost of the books, but you can get a tidy fifty percent mark-up. Don't try to sell books wholesale blindly. You should know a bit about your lists--people you try to sell to.. The best way to get into selling other publications is to first establish your own list, and then offer books, reports, and catalogs of materials related in subject matter.

## JUST TESTING

Classified ads, display ads and direct mail offers are the ways to sell information by mail.. Since you haven't gone through the expense of mass producing your materials, you can gamble a little on the type of advertising you want to do.

How can you tell if you materials will sell? You run test ads, check results, and analyze what kind of draw or appeal there is for your product. Then you analyze the response to the actual product.. Were many sent back for refunds? Did you get a high percentage of orders from specific ads?

To calculate a successful test, you need to figure the percentage of response for you to break even, to profit, and profit greatly.. Go ahead--dream. BELIVE IT WILL HAPPEN--and you will profit.

Some of the things tested for are price, the type of publication, and the appeal.. Successful ads in one publication can be used for another.. If an ad doesn't seem to work, remove it and try again.. It is only through testing that you will know your product's appeal.... The actual test will give you an indication of how much of one item will sell.

Don't get discouraged. You need persistence to continue testing and running inexpensive ads. Successful people win more often because they STAY IN THE GAME.

## RUNNING CLASSIFIEDS

Have you looked at all the magazines that cater to your subject? Choose the type of publication whose readers have demonstrated the same interests as your materials offer. The product must appeal to hundreds of readers of these publications. Check the ads for similar materials... How long have they been running? Be prepared to run your ad for months. Often a big draw doesn't happen until the second, third or fourth repeat. apply caution if you are trying for a big audience with a large distribution publication--your product might not have a mass appeal, and it may cost more to advertise in a larger circulation magazine. On the other hand, small local publications have only a

limited draw for specialized information--unless it is regional. The best way to sell information by mail is in a two-step approach.. Few items are bought directly from a short ad with a large price, but there's a high response on things for free. Place a short, inexpensive ad in the classifieds section of the publication you choose. The ad should be to the point, accurate to the type of information, and enticing.. You might point out some benefits the reader would get, such as earning extra money or learning a special secret. Include a few words about "free details" or "write for free information."

These ads, called leader classifieds, build sound customer lists for continued returns and a solid establishment.

If you place different ads in several magazines, under different headings, how can you tell where the response came from? You include a code in the address. This is called keying the address. You should always include a complete, unabbreviated name and address in the classified ad. In the company name or in the sheet address, you place your key that indicates in which magazine the ad was placed, and in which issue.

Usually, keys come in the form of division, department or suite numbers. The easiest keys simply substitute one letter for the name of the publication and a number to indicate which month the ad appeared.

Once you get inquiries from the classified ads, you send your pitch--a printed sales letter or brochure. You can have a one-page description of your product which includes an order form, or you can be more elaborate and produce a sales package. But it is this conversion--from inquiry to order--that will MAKE YOU MONEY.

## DISPLAY ADS

Although classified ads produce inquiries and potential buyers at a lower cost, sometimes you have a product that will sell better another way. Display ads, also called space ads, are the best way to advertise if you need to show your product.

A small line drawing of one of your products with a reasonable price and details, as well as information about free catalog will bring in good long-term customers.

Buying space in publications is not difficult. Nor do you need an advertising agency to do it for you. In fact, you can save the agency discount for yourself by establishing your own in-house agency.

Some publications offer an additional fifteen percent discount for ads from a small mail order business.

Check with the publication for the rate card---the details of ordering space--and for the requirements of buying ad space. The advertising representative will be most helpful in teaching you how to place an ad. You can call that person, or write, if the publication is in a different city.

Direct mail is a tried and true way to make money in the mail



order business. But don't try it as a beginner--only if you have a sure seller and can afford the expense of printing a package. Each direct mail package has a sales letter, a brochure, and order form, and reply envelope.

The sales letter must be personal and have a great appearance. Have it run off on letterhead in two colors.. It should discuss the features of your product rather than appeals... It should be in color with illustrations and look professional.. You don't need to provide a postage paid reply; it doesn't make a big difference.

Your own list of possible buyers from classified leaders is the best list for selling related materials. You can also rent lists from companies and get pre-addressed gummed labels... But be careful to choose lists related to your materials.

All direct mail advertising must be tested first. A good test for a small business is two three hundred pieces.

## WRITING AD COPY

If you plan to sell something you didn't write, you should be totally familiar with the contents of the information you plan to sell. Read through or listen to the product. Why would someone want to buy it?

Good ad copy gets the reader's attention. Try out a few snappy phrases until you get one you're happy with. Arouse the reader's curiosity. What is the basic, bottom-line appeal?

Make a list of the features and benefits. Will it show how to earn money? Will it teach something new? Will the reader how to do something important?

Be credible in what you're writing; don't cheat the buyer. Don't give the product benefits or features it doesn't have.. When you're honest with the customer, you will get repeat business over and over.

Talk to the reader directly. Use short sentences packed with action verbs, and persuade the customer to ACT NOW, while it is at hand. And, always offer a money-back guarantee. The honesty of approach far outweighs the number of refunds you might have. Then fill in the details of the products to make it sound essential to have. Be sure to include an order form, either as part of the letter or separately.

## YOU'RE SUCCESSFUL

The fun part is when the checks come in and you complete the promises you advertised, sending the information out.. There are government regulations concerning prompt responses, so be certain to ship your order within thirty days of receiving the request, or you must inform the customer of the delay and offer a full refund.

Here's where you put your organizational skills to a test. It's important to keep the inquiries and orders straight, so you're sure to send out the proper materials for each request. You might

invest in a pre-inked stamp that marks the inquiry or order "received", and another stamp mark the date it came in and the date it was responded to.

## ANALYZING RESULTS

Are your ads pulling? Is one magazine better than another? How many inquiries are you getting? How many convert into sales? How much money are you making?

An easy way to analyze results is to keep accurate records of the responses. You can then determine whether you want to keep renewing your classifieds, or if you need to change your sales letter.

To make a record sheet, you can use accountants, columned paper or use a ruler to make your own.

To make a record sheet, you can use accountant's columned paper or use the ruler to make your own. You should have a separate page for each ad you placed, or for each key.

The top of the sheet should have the following information: the name of the publication, the issue number or date, the date the issue was placed on sale, the address key, the size and cost of the ad, which ad you used, the price of the product, and the product.

The columns of the record sheet should be divided into two categories: inquiries from the classified ads, and orders placed from the sales literature mailed in response to the inquiries.

Along the left side, number consecutively in a vertical column. These numbers indicate the number of dates that you received answers to your ad or orders from the sales literature.

The headings under inquiries are "date received, number received, and running total.

The headings under orders should be: number of orders received, running total, cash sales, and running total for cash sales.

In order to decide if you classified ad has been a worthwhile investment, you can determine the cost per inquiry by dividing the number of inquiries into the total cost per ad. Compare three months' worth of ads, and compare the average results to the ads run in another magazine. Which has provided the best response? But inquiries are not what you're after. Sales and profit are more important. How many orders are you getting?

You can find out the cost of advertising per order by first adding the cost of the sales literature to the cost of the ad...

Then divide the total number of orders into that sum.

To figure out how much pure profit you have, simply take the running total for cash sales, subtract the cost of your product per order and the cost of mailing and handling; subtract the cost of sending the sales literature per order and the cost of the ad.

Even if you break even the first few months of running the business **YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY**. The treasure of selling information is not to be grabbed at first. It is built up steadily, little by little until it brings in a tidy income.

## GOING TO PRESS

The test ads worked, and you get more orders in than you ever imagined. What do you do? Maybe you only had some material photocopied to see if it would be in demand, or you only prepared a few doze cassettes for trail.. Now you mass produce.

Don't be too hasty, however. Carefully calculate the amount of returns and the possible demand.

When you have a successful item, it is time to go to typesetting and printing. Local typesetters can advise you about the style and size of the type for your printed matter. Discuss it thoroughly, and be sure you know exactly the estimate of costs--it can be surprisingly expensive.

Ready to go to press. Compare prices. Get at least three comparative quotes from printers. And be sure to take a goo look at the work they do. Is the type clear, is it well-aligned on the paper, nothing crooked? Is everybody clear on what is expected? The roll'em.

## WHAT ARE THE LAWS?

Information selling business are encouraged by the United States government, but there are rules and regulations concerning the proper conducting of the business enterprise.

The most significant aspect the authorities look for is the possible fraud,, so you have to be careful to advertise only what your selling. Although most advertising copy brightens the benefits and good aspects of products, be sure it in no way misleads the buyer.

You can use testimonials in ad copy and sales literature. In fact, they are an excellent way to sell... But they must be backed up with pure fact and a person who can make the claim. Since most states require sales tax, check with your local authorities on how to get state tax number and collect and turn in the sale taxes.

If you have a genuine product to sell, use direct honest sales approach, and pay your taxes, you'll never have trouble with the law.

## WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THIS MONEY?

Even if you've never done bookkeeping, you can keep accurate records for yourself--and the government. You can purchase a bookkeeping pad at a stationery store, or just get some accountants' 4-column paper.

List every expense related to the business. Carefully note the date, the exact amount, the type of purchase (such as stamps, photocopies, etc.) and the place of purchase. **KEEP ALL RECEIPTS.** Put them in order and clip them to the page. When you have a larger volume of trade, you can file receipts according to vendor.

List all income. You will be responsible and could be audited. On a separate page or in a separate column, write down each check or money order you receive, and the source and date of the check. Use a separate business checking account for all business transactions. This makes it clear and simple for you to analyze your profit and to keep the records separate from your personal accounts.

## BUILDING REPEAT BUSINESS

Once you have a successful product with plenty of orders coming in, don't be tempted to expand too quickly. Carefully choose only one or two more products to add to your business, and go through all the testing steps with each one.

Even though you may feel great about response to your first few ventures, never put all the profit back into more expensive advertising or elaborate printing.. Keep some profit--only a little at a time.

Doesn't it feel good to have your own business/ And, you truly haven't spent much time or money. In fact, your small investment may have already doubled or tripled. If you want to attain everything you have always dreamed of, go ahead--get started. Now.

If you need specialized LEGAL advice or assistance on this subject, the services of a professional person is recommended.