

Post Card Profits

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Post Card Profits

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*** POST CARD PROFITS ***

INTRODUCTION

Selling with post cards is unique in so far as it affords the mail order beginner an excellent change to develop a part-time business with a very small capital investment. No expensive or special training outside of a basic knowledge of advertising and mail order salesmanship is required. Actually, all that's needed is average intelligence, common sense and some real effort on your part. If you're willing to learn the fundamentals and are willing to strive for your goal, reading this treatise might easily be the first step of a career that can take you as far as you want to go in this fascinating phase of mail order selling.

ADVANTAGES OF POST CARD SELLING

In general, the advantages of mail order selling are these, a mode of business that can be launched with a minimum of capital, elaborate facilities are not necessary, prospects are unlimited, activity is stimulating and satisfying, can be worked from ones own home in spare time. Above and over these, there are several additional advantages peculiar to post card selling that are not extended to other methods of mail order promotion. Post cards are relatively easy and inexpensive to handle. By employing post cards as the sales messenger, the mail order dealer makes the very best use of his capital, a very small percentage of returns will bring a profit. Post cards go as first class mail for about the price of third class matter, which brings a prompt presentation of the sales message. Perhaps of more importance is the fact that post cards receive very favorable reader attention in comparison to the usual third class mailings, and after all, getting the prospect to read the sales message is half the job in mail order selling.

ITEMS THAT CAN BE SOLD BY POST CARD

New, unique and unusual items are always good post card items, however, they must be quality or bargain items that serve a real need to be successful. They should be light in weight and easy to package and ship, preferably items that are not readily available in local stores. Generally speaking, items priced between \$5.00 and \$15.00 are most productive. The scope of products that can be sold by post cards are almost unlimited. some items that are

currently selling well are books, plans, hosiery, household gadgets, imported gifts, packaged foods, cigars, novelties, flower seeds, stationery and toys.

Very few items will sell profitably by mail priced at under 5 dollars. For example on a \$3.00 item bearing a 70% markup, a return of better than 10% would be necessary to make the project even slightly worthwhile, and \$10 would be an exceptional return indeed. I remember years back when a dollar item pulled a profitable return, but that was in a bygone era when post cards went for three pennies.

CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS

In comparison to other mail order ventures, the amount of capital needed to start a post card mail order business is moderate indeed. The initial investment may be anywhere from \$300.00 and up. At the minimum you will require approximately \$165.00 for printing and postage of 1,000 cards, \$35.00 for the mailing list and an undetermined amount for stock. You will also need a small supply of business stationery and an improvised record keeping system.

If at all possible, it is suggested that you also obtain a typewriter. Business letters written in longhand to sources of supply or in reply to inquiries will brand you an amateur, and naturally depress your profit potential. A good rebuilt typewriter can be purchased for \$100.00 or less. Failing to afford this, one can be rented for a few dollars per month.

It will also be necessary for you to have a small cash reserve available to enable you to sustain your endeavor from its inception to the time when it can be operated at a profit. For at least the first few months you will likely not be taking in as much as you must spend, consequently, as you spend, capital must be replaced.

In the absence of sufficient capital to meet the basic requirements outlined above, it is advisable to wait until you can accumulate enough funds for initialing your plans in a proper way. During the saving period, you can perfect your ideas through additional investigation and study.

NET POTENTIAL

If profit is to be realized, there must be a sufficient margin between the selling price and cost to cover operating expense and net profit. This spread between cost of goods and retail price is called mark-up. While there are always exceptions to the rule, it is generally agreed among mail order experts that a mark-up of at least 300% (three times wholesale cost) on any item marketed by mail is necessary to net a reasonable profit.

Suppose, for example, you are offering a \$7.00 item that bears a mark-up of \$5.50 per sale. If the promotional cost is 20 cents per mailing unit (this includes printing of cards, postage and mailing list), it would cost you \$200.00 to reach 1,000 prospects. A 5% return would bring you 50 orders, a gross return of \$350.00 and a net profit of \$75.00. As you can see, unless you handle an item that carries a good margin of profit on each sale, it might not be feasible to operate profitably. On the above example, if the mark-up was only \$4.00 instead of \$5.50, the consequence would be no net profit at all.

HOW TO PREPARE SALES COPY

Post card sales copy should be brief, specific, direct and honest. It must ATTRACT ATTENTION, SECURE INTEREST, PRODUCE BELIEF or CONVICTION, and finally GET THE PROSPECT TO ACT.

This is a big order for 3x5 inches of copy, so no space can be wasted, every square inch must be used. Much care and effort is required in preparing the copy, tell the sales story as completely as space will permit, give the facts clearly and dramatically, then ask for the order. Avoid extravagant claims and fancy language. When writing the copy imagine yourself talking personally to the person at whom your message is directed. The very core of successful mail selling is catering to the interest of the purchaser.

Layout is important, headlines and bi-lines must be well-planned and effectively positioned. Art work used should have a purpose in direct relation to the product being offered, and never be used for mere beauty or atmosphere. An actual illustration of the item being offered always provides dramatic appeal.

Always remember to incorporate that magic word "GUARANTEED" into your sales message. It gives the purchaser confidence to know he can get his money back if he is dissatisfied with his purchase, and consequently makes the order easier to obtain.

MAILING LISTS

A good mailing list is the key to a successful post card sales operation, and very careful attention must be given to its selection. Any list employed must be compiled of names that have shown a definite interest in, or have previously purchased by mail, items similar to the product you are promoting. Professional mailing list brokerage firms can furnish names of almost any conceivable listing. If you will tell them the purpose in mind, they can help you select a suitable classification. However, be careful to avoid lists that are out of date, improperly organized or too expensive to be used profitably. Deal only with brokerage firms that will submit definite data on the development of lists they supply.

Mailing list are usually offered in lots of 1,000 names or more, typed on sheets of perforated gummed labels ready to affix to your cards. They are normally priced at anywhere from \$30.00 to \$75.00 per 1,000.

You can obtain a roster of reliable Mailing List Brokerage firms by requesting under your business letterhead to Target Marketing, North American Publishing co., 401 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19108-9988

IMPORTANCE OF TESTING

After you have selected an item for promotion, your next step is to test its sales potential with a mailing of 1,000 cards to a suitable list of names. Should the response from this first group of prospects contacted prove productive, proceed with an additional trial mailing of 3,000 cards to the sale list category. If this mailing turns out to be profitable, indications are very much in favor of your having a winner on your hands, and you can start thinking in terms of 10,000 or more for the next mailing with expectations of approximately similar results as to response.

PROFITABLE "FOLLOW-UPS"

Any successful mail order business is built on repeat orders, the practice of following up every sale made with new and related items at regular intervals. The wise operator will be careful to keep an active record of all his customers, a simple system of 3x5" file cards can serve nicely for this purpose. Every customer established represents a valuable asset that should be utilized to the fullest extent.

Keep in mind - effectiveness of follow-up offers depends upon their tie-in with the interest already created by the first purchase. In other words, if your follow-up is something a large percentage of your customers can use to advantage, and they are satisfied with the first sale, results are bound to be fruitful. And there is no need to stop with just one follow-up offer, satisfied customers can be sold to again and again, provided they are kept satisfied.

STOCK VERSUS DROP-SHIPPING

In general drop-shipping is not desirable. Cost per unit usually is much higher than when purchased in stock lots. Also, the added delay in getting the orders to the customers may incur bad-will and result in excessive returned merchandise. Also, you will want to keep your customer names confidential. For these reasons, it is recommended that you invest in putting in a small stock of the items you intend to market. A word of caution should be given in this connection however, and that is, since any mail order venture is at best a gamble, at first it is wise to buy only in the

quantities that are practical for you to handle. As results justify, you can take on larger quantities and then be entitled to a greater discount and profit.

LEGAL ASPECTS

No license or permit of any kind is required by the Federal Government to operate a mail order business. Also, as a rule there are no local restrictions imposed when interstate commerce is involved. Consult city and state authorities for general guidance in this respect.

If you use a "firm" name or any title other than your own personal name, record this fact at your local post office so that your mail can be kept straight. In some states the use of a "firm" name is limited, or the "firm" must be registered. Find out from your county clerk what the laws are relating to "firm" designations in your locality.

There are not a great many postal problems that will confront you, but when in doubt, the quickest and best way to get a specific answer to any question pertaining to postal rules or regulations is to inquire at your local post office.

At the time this is written, a number of states have put sales taxes into effect. According to the best legal opinion you are not obliged to pay sales tax on any sales covered by interstate commerce. This means sales made to all states but the one you reside in.

IN CONCLUSION

Know exactly what you want to accomplish, set up your campaign as best you can to accomplish that end, and then carry out your plan to the letter. Dozens of other people, from all walks of life, have built a profitable and satisfying mail order business with post cards, and there is no reason in the world why you should not be able to do it just as effectively.