

Ten Crucial Steps To Mail Order Success

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There are a number of difficulties a beginning entrepreneur may encounter that can "torpedo" his business almost before he knows it. But the wise mail order dealer can sidestep some of the pitfalls of operating his own business by recognizing and avoiding the following common mistakes.

1. Figuring that the one "How-To" book, booklet, or report that you read about starting a mail order business told you everything you need to know. You never really stop learning about this business as long as you're in it, and you need to continually seek out new information and advice from those more experienced than you.
2. Planning your entire business around only one product or service. It is best to have several different items to promote; give your customers a choice. And always have something to follow-up an order or inquiry with. It costs too much to obtain the name and addresses of potential customers to simply try to sell them one item, one time.
3. Spending too much of your advertising money on only one or two untested ads in only one or two untested publications. Start smart... test your ads (2 to 3 concurrent insertions) in a variety of publications that are likely candidates for the product or service you are selling. This means studying many different magazines, newspapers, adsheets, and so on to determine where your ad will best fit in and has the best chance of being seen by readers who will be interested in what you are offering.
4. Believing that your advertising only 3 or 4 times will be enough to establish your business and earn your fortune. There is one theory that states that people need to see your ad a minimum of 3 times before it makes an impression on them. Another theory states they must see it 7 times!
5. Failing to adequately "key" your ads so you know which ads in which publications are pulling inquiries or orders for you. Without this knowledge, you'll continue to throw your money away by advertising in totally unsuitable and unresponsive publications.
6. Trying to sell a \$10 or more item in a small space or classified ad. Not enough information comes across in a small advertisement; people won't part with this kind of money on the basis of your 40 to 50 words. It is best to ask for inquiries and offer free information. Once you have the customer's name and address, use your full size circulars, brochures, and sales

letters to convince your customer of the benefits you are offering.

7. Not keeping adequate records on the customers who do respond to your ads. These people have demonstrated their interest and faith in your company and your product. If they have bought from you once, they may very well buy from you again. Keep track of their names, addresses, date of sale or inquiry, what ad(s) they responded to, item(s) bought from you and amount paid, and then mail your promotional pieces to them periodically. Your customer list can be one of your most valuable business tools.

8. Not using proper postage on your mailing pieces. You should weigh everything you're mailing first class (an inexpensive postage scale cost about \$6.00), and then affix the correct stamps. Most people overestimate how heavy their mailing piece is and put two first class stamps on an envelope that only weights one ounce. Wasteful habits at such a basic level in mail order can be the start of financial ruin.

9. Thinking that how your mailing piece looks doesn't matter, it's the content that counts. The content of any circular, program, report, booklet, etc., is of course important, but a poorly laid-out job, badly copied piece which is barely readable does a poor sales job, no matter what it says. The "look" you are presenting matters more than you may realize.

10. Believing that once you have your customer's money, you have done your job. Always respond quickly. Mail out the order or requested information within 48 hours. Take care of any problems or complaints immediately; refund their money if they are dissatisfied with their purchase. Always give your customer more than he expects, and he'll want to do business with you again in future.