



18 Ways to Increase Readership of Your Direct Mail Letter and Achieve Greater Response

By Hugh Chewing

Direct mail isn't a complicated business. If you can get more people to read further into your letter, you're going to achieve a greater response.

Successful direct mail is a conversation that motivates the reader to take a specific action. If we can get the prospect to listen more, or in our case read further along in our letter, we'll have a greater chance of getting them to take the desired action.



Here are 18 proven ways you can increase readership of your direct mail letters and achieve a more profitable mailing campaign.

1. Make the letter look like a letter. Practically everyone is going to recognize it as a "mass mailing" but create the perception of a personal letter.
2. Include a salutation. You wouldn't start a conversation without a greeting so include a salutation with your letter. And assign title codes. There is nothing more *impersonal* than "Dear Mr. Tom Jones." (Even if you only have title codes for half your prospects,

CHEWNING DIRECT MARKETING

www.cdmdirect.com

Phone: 949-854-5401 . Email: HChewing@CDMdirect.com

©Chewing Direct Marketing

use them. Getting 50 percent right is much better than 100% wrong.)

3. You're writing one letter to one person. Good direct mail is an "I" to "you" medium. Not "us" and "we's."
4. Sell benefits, not features. You may be proud of what you're selling but the letter isn't about you. Write about what's important to the reader and show them the benefits of responding.
5. Use wide margins and double space between paragraphs. And don't justify your right margins. Flush left, ragged to the right.
6. Use a serif type for your letter copy – Georgia, Courier and Times Roman are examples. (Serif type has the little “feet” at the bottom and is proven to enhance reading flow and reduce eye strain which is why your newspaper, magazines and published books use serif type.) Graphic designers seem to love sans serif type – Arial, Helvetica and Verdana are examples – but save it for headlines and things you don't want read like disclosures.
7. Typically, the letter's first paragraph and the P.S. at the end of the letter get the most attention. Use these areas to capture the reader's attention and tell them the benefits of responding.
8. Remember, you're trying to communicate, not impress. Write in a conversational style as if you were speaking face-to-face and if this includes incomplete sentences, the use of contractions or a preposition at the end of a sentence, so be it. As a rule of thumb, if you can't spell a word or need to look up its meaning, don't use it.
9. Use your words to create an image for the reader. If the reader can see himself or herself in the situation you create, they'll take an interest and read on. It's like selling a house. When you hear the prospective buyers talking about where the sofa will go, you know you've got them. Same thing here. With your words, let the reader picture how they'll benefit by responding today.
10. Use an involvement device – surveys, petitions, punch-out tokens, samples of cloth, address labels, greeting cards, CDs – anything you can use to get the reader involved will increase readership and response.
11. Keep your paragraphs short. You want to vary your paragraph length to keep your copy interesting and flowing. But as a rule of

CHEWNING DIRECT MARKETING

www.cdmdirect.com

Phone: 949-854-5401 . Email: HChewning@CDMdirect.com

©Chewning Direct Marketing

thumb, limit each paragraph to no more than five lines.

12. Always indent your paragraphs. Eye-camera studies show that indented paragraphs “catch” the eye moving down the page and make the letter more readable.
13. Single space the letter. Double space between paragraphs.
14. Don't end a page with a complete sentence. Look at your newspaper. To finish practically any article, you have to turn the page and that's exactly what you want the reader to do with your letter – keep reading toward the final call to action.
15. When using abbreviations, always spell the word out when first used. For example, rather than beginning a letter with "ACLU." you would write, "American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). You'll lose all momentum if the reader must turn back to the start of the letter to understand what you're talking about.
16. Remember, as a direct mail copywriter you're a salesperson competing for the reader's time. Get to the point and stay with it.
17. When using "handwritten" notes in the margin and/or underlining, be sure the letter signer uses the same pen used to sign the letter. This is one letter, written by one person, to one other person. Make it believable.
18. Use nothing smaller than 10-1point type (except for disclaimers) and for an older audience, you'll want to use a larger 12-point type.

As direct mail copywriters, we can't close the sale without getting the prospect to read our letter. Use each of these proven 18 tips to increase readership and you'll see a positive impact with your response.

CHEWNING DIRECT MARKETING

www.cdmdirect.com

Phone: 949-854-5401 . Email: HChewning@CDMdirect.com

©Chewning Direct Marketing