

Looking for Leads? These 4 Direct Mail Offers Are Your Answer



When it comes to lead generation, there are only four types of leads that work.

March 6, 2019 4 min read

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The following excerpt is from Robert W. Bly's book The Direct Mail Revolution: How to Create Profitable Direct Mail Campaigns in a Digital World. Buy it now from Amazon | Barnes & Noble | Apple Books | IndieBound

In a two-step direct-mail campaign, where you're trying to generate leads rather than direct sales, there are four basic offers you can make: soft, hard, negative, and deferred.

Soft Offer for Lead Generation

In lead-generating direct mail, the simplest and most common offer has traditionally been a free brochure and other information describing the product or service. In direct mail, this typically reads, "For a free brochure on the Widget 3000, complete and mail the enclosed reply card today."

What the prospect gets is a brochure describing your product. What they have to do to get it is fill in and mail a reply card. The key to the soft offer is that the odds of your prospect being ready to buy the minute they open your mailer are low. It's the ideal response option for prospects who might be interested in your product in the future but not today. They can get sales literature that tells them more about the product without speaking to a salesperson, which they are probably reluctant to do at this early stage in the buying cycle.

Hard Offer for Lead Generation

The soft offer is for prospects not yet ready to buy; the hard offer attracts those who are more likely to purchase. In the hard offer, the marketer encourages the prospect to call or request that a salesperson contact them. The offer is made more attractive by calling it a briefing, demonstration, initial consultation, evaluation, free estimate, needs assessment, or initial appointment.

These hard offers all involve direct person-to-person contact between the buyer and seller, either over the phone, in a face-to-face meeting, or via Skype. During these conversations, the salesperson attempts to persuade the prospect to buy the product or service.

The Negative Offer

The negative-offer option on the reply card reads as follows:

[] Not interested right now because:

Typically, the sales letter refers to the negative offer using the following language:

P.S. Even if you're not interested in [name of product or service], please complete and return the enclosed reply card. Thank you.

The negative offer provides a response option for people who are prospects (that is, they have a need or problem your product addresses) but for some reason don't want to buy from you right now.

Normally, people who are uninterested in your offer will not respond to your mailings. But by adding a negative-offer option, you'll get responses from a small portion of them. And often, by following up, you can answer their objections, overcome their hesitancy, and convert some of them to actual leads, increasing the total number of leads generated by the mailing.

The Deferred Offer

The deferred offer encourages responses from prospects who don't have an immediate need but may have a future requirement for your product or service. The deferred-offer option on the reply card reads as follows:

[] Not interested right now. Try me again in:
----- (fill in month/year)

The deferred-offer option box tells the prospect, "If you don't need us now but may in the future, you can use this box

to let us know, without getting calls and annoying follow-up from salespeople now.”

Use the deferred offer if you think a significant number of prospects are more likely to need your services in the future. Note: If they say to try them again in June, call them in May. That way, you are more likely to reach them before they have made a purchase decision.

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