



5 Easy Ways to Lower Your Direct Mail Costs

Tough economic times can put a real strain on your marketing budget. Here are 5 ideas that will save you money now.

1. Mail to the right people by targeting your lists to reach only those people most likely to be interested in your product or service. Many tools are available to profile your mailing lists utilizing the amazing amount of information accessible today on households and businesses. Ask us about enhancing your data to target the right audience. You can mail fewer pieces and get better results.

2. Clean In-House lists. Avoid undeliverable mail by updating your lists at least twice a year. There are several ways to get address updates for people who have moved and to eliminate invalid or incomplete addresses. Mail that does not get delivered or is sent to the wrong address wastes your money.

3. Size matters. For lower postage rates, keep your mail piece at letter size, no larger than 6 1/8" high by 11 1/2" long. Mail pieces larger than that fall into the flats category and have a significantly higher postage rate. Flats can cost more than twice as much per piece as letters.

4. Location, location, location. Make sure the address and barcode block on letter size mail fits into the USPS OCR read area. If it doesn't fit, you pay for it with additional postage. We can provide you with a template to guide you.

5. An ounce of prevention. Send a mock-up or pdf file to Eye/Comm, before your mail piece is printed. We will gladly assess it for automation compatibility, or, if necessary, send it the Postal Service for a ruling. There is no charge for this service and it can save you lots of money and avoid costly delays.

Got Sand?



- A beach pail holds about 3,500,000,000 grains of sand.
- The world's tallest sandcastle was built on Myrtle Beach in South Carolina as part of the 2007 Sun Fun Festival. The structure was 49.55 feet.
- JULY 13: U.S. Open Sandcastle Competition Sand sculptors flock to Imperial Beach to compete in this 28th annual event, the largest of its kind in the U.S.

Got Laughs?

- If at first you don't succeed, then skydiving definitely isn't for you.
- Living on Earth is expensive, but it does include a free trip around the sun.
- Beat the 5 o'clock rush, leave work at noon.
- Some people have a way with words, others not have way.
- The severity of the itch is inversely proportional to the ability to reach it.

Special points of interest:

- 5 Easy Ways to Lower Your Direct Mail Costs
- Five Sins of Strategy Erosion
- *Your questions answered*

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Five Sins of Strategy Erosion and How to Avoid Them

Allen Ginsberg may have seen “the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness.” I have the Beat poet beat: I’ve seen the best direct marketing plans, concepts, and creative strategies destroyed by sins of omission or commission in execution. That’s strategy erosion. It’s a madness of its own, but it definitely can be prevented. Prevention starts with knowing the litany of sins.

1. Failing to focus on the objective.

In lead generation, someone says “Let’s just put in a few paragraphs more about the product.” That’s erosion, because the strategy in lead generation is to sell the prospect on taking the next step, not on the product. In sweeps promotions, it is, again, saying too much about the product. Look at an American Express Publishing sweeps package: there is virtually nothing about the magazine or service.

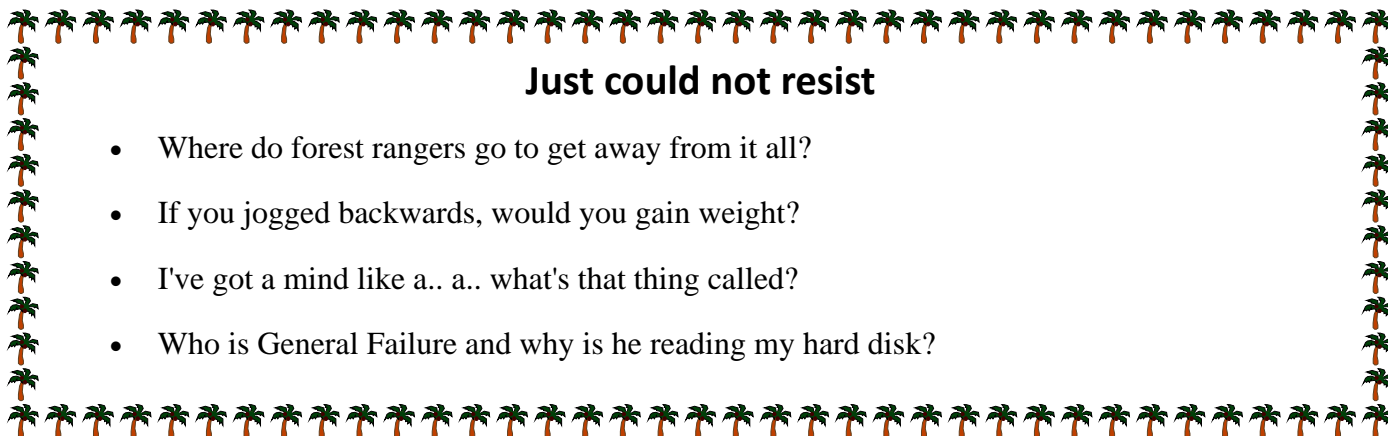
Then there are the folks who don’t understand that the objective is to build a business. They will do anything – wild and woolly offers, over-the-top creative, deception – to get a response, and that doesn’t necessarily mean they are “building customers.” Spending too much money getting into the mail falls into this category, as does not spending enough to meet the response and ultimate sales objectives.

2. Dropping the ball on what drives response.

I’m constantly amazed at how few big name companies do little list modeling, research and even list testing, and how few have thought about media like inserts, drtv, and print. Having the right list in direct mail is infinitely more important than having a great creative package.

In fact, great creative comes in third in the factors that drive response. Having a strong offer is becoming more important than ever. I say that because online media are so offer-oriented. Make sure your offer doesn’t turn people off. Recently, I developed a lead gen package for a condo developer in Costa Rica. I know the list selection was right and the creative was on the mark. It failed because the client insisted on asking for a \$2,000 binder in the package in addition to having people pay for their flight from the U.S. to San Jose.

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Just could not resist

- Where do forest rangers go to get away from it all?
- If you jogged backwards, would you gain weight?
- I've got a mind like a.. a.. what's that thing called?
- Who is General Failure and why is he reading my hard disk?



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3. Using the wrong words, too many words, or too few words.

When I broke in as a copywriter some #@ years ago, I wondered why I had to be concerned with every word I wrote. After all, in direct mail there are so many of them compared to, say, the famous Doyle Danebach "Think Small" ad for Volkswagen. I had lesson-after-lesson in the importance of "le mot juste" (as Flaubert called it). Perhaps the best involved the famous "Damn!" package that Bill Jayme wrote for BusinessWeek. The idea was that "you go into a meeting, thinking you have the latest intelligence and 'DAMN!', someone outflanks you." Harold McGraw stopped the mailing of this winning package because that one word was in 72 pt. type on the envelope and was repeated a dozen times inside. I substituted "I could kick myself", mailed the package, and it flopped. Jayme laughed at that and substituted "%#@&!" and the package still flopped.

Currently, I'm working with a client mailing to CEOs of relatively small companies. He insists that the copy talk about the "Impotent CEO". CEOs have enough other problems. The word "Powerless" would be just as powerful.

I encounter far too many companies who don't understand the impact of the Internet on copy length and structure. Voluminous copy doesn't work in most applications; exceptions are those selling products which themselves require extensive reading – newsletters, for example.

On the other end are clients with little direct marketing experience. They will say that lead generation messages (generally they're against letters) should only be a paragraph or two. They don't realize that recipients sense the paucity of key things to say.

4. Losing the differential advantage.

Every product or service needs to have a differential advantage (or USP) if it is to survive in this commoditized world. That differential advantage sometimes gets lost because we get so wrapped up in the tactics of involvement and immediacy and in pushing our targets to respond. Of course if your product/service does not possess an inherent differential advantage, then the strategy must be to make your offer the differential advantage.

5. Blowing production.

There seems to be no end to what can go wrong in getting mail packages into the postal stream. Most copywriters don't care; I do because I've seen some of my best thinking and copy destroyed by production glitches. What should you worry about most? Incorrect 800#s, BREs that don't fit, typos, bad matches in personalization, stock that has too much show through, miscoding, deficient tracking, bad merge/purges, the wrong inserts, non-USPS compliant envelope sizes, and of course smudged, smeared printing.

How do you avoid these sins of omission and commission? How do you prevent strategy erosion? By having a real creative brief okayed by the client and read more than once. By having checklists that must be initialed by those working on the mailing. By making sure that everyone realizes that the best ideas poorly executed lead to job loss.

I've been reminded that I should end my articles and columns with a note of comfort. Here it is: As bad as strategy erosion in direct marketing is, there is something worse – having no strategy!

-Lee Marc Stein

Lee Marc Stein is an internationally known direct marketing consultant and copywriter. He has extensive experience in circulation, insurance and financial services, high tech, and BtoB marketing. He works with direct response agencies in addition to having his own clients. Read more of Lee's articles at www.leemarcstein.com.



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Did you know...
The first Ferris wheel was built in Atlantic City in 1869.

What can we do for you?

- **I know that later this year I'll have to update my mailing list to meet the Move Update requirements. If I add an ancillary service endorsement, such as "Address Service Requested" or use OneCode ACS on my mail piece, will that meet the requirement?**

No, printing an appropriate ancillary service endorsement on a mailpiece does not, by itself, satisfy the requirement, which applies now to Presorted First Class and goes into effect for Standard mail on November 23, 2008. You must have updated your list within 95 days of the mail date using an approved Move Update process.

An appropriate ancillary service endorsement or OneCode ACS is an approved Move Update process only after you have updated your list from the address correction information you receive from that mailing.



- **Is it any cheaper to trim my own inserts and fold my letters?**

That depends. If your inserts are trimmed precisely and letters are machine folded accurately, we don't have to charge you to do that. However, if all pieces are not trimmed exactly to the same size, the weight variation could disqualify your mailing from discounted postage rates. Inconsistent folding, such as hand folding, could make your inserts non-machinable, resulting in higher inserting costs. We recommend having Eye/Comm trim and fold on our precision equipment to avoid the possibility of additional costs caused by inconsistent pieces.

Words to the wise:

- First the doctor told me the good news: I was going to have a disease named after me. - Steve Martin
- And in the end it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years. - Abraham Lincoln
- The secret of creativity is knowing how to hide your sources. - Albert Einstein
- Ah...so many pedestrians, so little time... - Robin Williams