



Keys to Making Direct Mail Leads Work for You

An important key to making a lead generation program successful is to quality check the solution provider you are working with. Knowing and understanding the correct way to attract prospects is critical to your overall success and just sending out mail pieces designed to illicit *any* response should not qualify as true systemized lead generation program.

Scrutinies from state and federal officials have caused some concern for financial advisors and agents utilizing direct mail companies to help supply lead generation solutions. This recent review by authorities focused primarily on the mail houses that were attempting to get around the Do Not Call list by gaining information about prospects using questionable direct mail content. These practices have elicited some high profile news articles, including a front page story in the Wall Street Journal, but agents should not fear instead they should simply ensure that their marketing partner is doing what is compliant.

Here are some tips to consider:

THE MAILER

Review the mail piece carefully before choosing the campaign. Remember a response rate is only good if the responder is a true potential client. If a company is promising a 3% response rate but the topic is not relevant to your expertise or business model then don't waste your time or money. Choose a mail piece that is right for you and right for the type of clients that you desire to build a business relationship with.

Make sure to clearly identify to the prospect where the information is coming from. Ensure that the mail piece does not imply the incorrect indentifying information. For example, make sure the mailer does not look like it is coming from a government agency. Be extremely cautious that the information being requested on the response card is protecting the confidentiality of the consumer. For example, if they are being asked their birthday or spouse's birthday on the reply card, this is unnecessary information, and not needed for you to have in a mailer response card. All you need is permission to contact that prospect and that is accomplished simply through date and signature to verify that the responder is requesting information from you. Pay attention to how the response is being returned to you. If the prospect is sending a mail-back reply it should be enclosed in a postage-paid reply envelope to safe guard personal and confidential information.

The mailer should include a disclaimer that notes the fact that the mailer is not associated with any state or federal agency and that the prospect should consult with an attorney or financial advisor for more detailed information. These are important elements that inform the consumer of their rights and will also help to protect you, the agent, from complaints.



THE RESPONSE

Ensure that the direct mail company that you are working with has a plan of action to get the mailed responses to you quickly. Even in the situation of a reply card it should be no longer than 14 days to see your responses. The best option is to work with a direct mail provider that offers both a phone in response and a mail back feature. This not only causes quicker responses but also offers the consumer a choice. Some providers may also offer recorded call functions that allows agents to listen to the conversation between the operator and the prospect as they discuss the reasons why the prospect is calling. This is a huge benefit to you as you begin to make your call backs to the prospects. *Make sure this feature is compliant with your agency and state compliance practices.

A direct mail company may offer for you to receive the mail back responses and collect them over a certain period and then mail the responses to you to. However, many prospects will often forget they even responded and thus, when you contact them they may no longer be interested due to the amount of time lapse. Look for direct mail response options that offer forwarding of the response cards within 24 hours; this will help to save time in reminding the prospect what specifically they responded to.

An important thing to remember is that these prospects are responding for more information, frequently offered in the form of a brochure or report. Most companies may supply these to you as part of the direct mail order campaign. It is important for you to make sure to get the requested information in the hands of the responding prospect. Remember, it is about you building your reputation in the local community and this is quickly accomplished by follow through. We all know that word-of-mouth referrals are a key in the long-term success of any business. Even if the prospect does not want or need help today it is possible that their neighbor or friend might call for help tomorrow. Allow your investment to work for you regardless of the timing of the prospect.

CONCLUSION

Gain integrity while building your business. One way you will do that is by working with a direct mail vendor who will not only have your best interest in mind, but also considers the privacy of the consumer. Find a direct mail organization that has proven and consistent results. Make sure that they have the ability to get the leads generated to you quickly and efficiently.

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