



7 Ways to Power Up Your Postcards

By Dean Rieck

In my tool kit, there's a ratty old screwdriver that I inherited from my father. And he inherited it from his father. It's beat up from years of hard use and stands out from all the other shiny new tools. Why do I hang onto it? Because despite the wear and tear, it's a good, solid tool and always gets the job done.

That's the way I feel about postcards. They're not new or flashy, but they always get the job done. Postcards are cheap, versatile and effective. They're easy to produce. And you can get them in the mail and start getting results in just days. Of course, a lot of people say postcards are too small to be effective. But they're wrong. Postcards will work like gangbusters if you use them correctly. Postcards have been a secret weapon of mine for a long time. Here are seven little tricks to power up postcards.

- 1. Aim exclusively to drive traffic.** Postcards are generally not a good format for closing a sale. Sometimes they work for direct sales, but not often. Their true power is in getting attention quickly and driving people to take a second step immediately. For example, you can drive people to a Web site, drive them to a retail store or drive them to request information. In marketing lingo, we're talking about the two-step sales process.
- 2. Focus on one big idea per card.** Just one. Not two or three. One. If you have more than one idea, create more than one card. For example, a client wanted to cheaply generate leads from a targeted audience. However, we didn't know which of several benefits would be the most compelling. So instead of cramming a laundry list into one card, we created a series of cards with one benefit each. This helped maintain focus in each card — from the headline to the call to action.
- 3. Get attention with a bold headline.** Sure, you should have a picture on the front too. But don't make the mistake of thinking that a picture is worth a thousand words. It's not. Only words drive action. And since a postcard must convey a powerful message quickly, you must have a powerful headline to do the job. All the usual headline rules apply, including selecting your audience and conveying a benefit.
- 4. Make a simple, compelling offer.** Again, the idea here is to get people to take the next step. So your offer should be related to that. In other words, if you're selling the world's greatest widget, don't present an offer for the widget on your postcard. Rather, your offer should simply be for more information about the widget. This can take the form of a demonstration, sample, brochure or some other free item. Don't get ahead of yourself and try to close the sale right away.
- 5. Provide a crystal clear call to action.** If you've gotten attention with a headline and made a next-step offer, now you need to issue a call to action that is direct and unambiguous. "Go to www.PensRUs.com and ask for your customized sample pack today!" Notice that the call to action tells your prospect what to do and how to do it.
- 6. Load up on the information.** Yes, a postcard should be quick and direct. Yes, you should focus on one main point. But that doesn't mean you have to be spartan with your copy. Longish copy works great even on a small postcard. However, given the next-step nature of the offer, all the information should be about what the prospect will get when he or she takes the next step, not necessarily about the product or service itself. If you're offering an information kit, list all the things in the kit and talk about what the prospect will discover, but without revealing too much. Tease, don't tell.
- 7. Think package, not postcard.** When I create a postcard, I'm really creating a mini-direct mail package, complete

with letter, brochure and reply. Why? Because what makes a direct mail package work is the same thing that makes a postcard work. At least it's what makes my postcards work. The letter is a short, personalized message on the address side of the card, complete with salutation and signature. The brochure is the information on the front of the card. And the reply is simply the call to action for a phone call, Web site visit or trip to a local store.

Remember, a postcard is not a billboard or a print ad. And it's not a piece of slick corporate advertising. It's a kick in the seat of the pants or a sharp punch between the shoulder blades to get people to take just one, teeny little step forward. The real sales pitch will happen at that next step: a detailed Web landing page, a salesperson in the retail store or a complete information kit.

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