



5 Direct Mail Inserts That Can Increase Response

By Hugh Chewning

It's said that the purpose of a direct mail letter is to sell, whereas the objective of a mailing's brochure is to explain.

That said, many mailers seem to have a compulsion to include a brochure in their mailing. But before you join the rush, note that very few of us have mailings whose purpose is to "explain."

For most of us, the objective is to increase the mailing's net profit, and too often a brochure distracts the reader's attention from responding.

Yet adding particular inserts to the mailing can increase response and – despite the added cost – increase the mailing's net income.

Here are examples of 5 inserts that you should test.

As you'll see, their purpose isn't to explain but to enhance the value of the benefits offered and to reduce any reluctance the reader may have to respond.

1. Add an insert to **emphasize your guarantee**. The mailing's recipients have plenty of reasons – real or perceived – not to respond to your offer, but a guarantee helps remove any hesitation that might otherwise jeopardize the sale. Featuring your guarantee in a separate insert – in addition to including it within the letter – **draws attention to your promise for a good customer experience** and can help drive profits.
2. Test an insert to **promote your back-end premium**. Premiums can motivate the reader to act and can increase the mailing's net income. Using an insert to promote your premium can enhance its perceived value and give you the opportunity to describe its features fully. As an example, offering a free watch to respondents can motivate fence-sitters to act. But

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when you display the watch on a color insert and describe how “its quartz movement virtually guarantees dependable accuracy,” it becomes even more appealing to the reader. (If included in the letter, this level of detail can distract the reader from your reason for writing.)

3. Use your insert to **add credibility** to your appeal with **testimonials** or **endorsements** from a third party. Using direct quotes from real people is far more believable than any marketing message you can devise on your own. Nothing gets a prospect to believe in your product or service more than the words of other consumers.

You can include testimonials in your letter, but grouping a number of direct quotes – complete with full attribution of their source – on a separate insert will typically have a greater impact on results. Plus, featuring a number of testimonials on a separate insert can give the quotes added importance.

4. Test using an insert to **expand the mailing’s offer**. An insert is a great place to introduce additional benefits, discounts, and special privileges. You can do this in your letter, but using a separate insert to expand your offer commands more attention and increases its perceived value.
5. You can also use your insert to **customize the offer to particular list segments**. When production restraints prevent you from fully personalizing the letter, a personalized insert can provide a cost-effective method to customize your message to different market segments. You can offer different premiums, emphasize different benefits, or simply speak more directly to the needs and interests of the reader.

For example, in a recent mailing for an environmental group, I used a personalized insert to describe the organization’s ongoing projects within the recipient’s home state. I could have included this in the letter, but the detail I wanted to provide would have become a distraction if included in the letter.

When printing your insert, use a paper stock and size that are different from what you use for the mailing’s letter. This will make the insert stand out in the mailing, draw more attention to its message, and increase the number of people who read its content.

Inserts are a powerful, flexible, and cost-effective tool you can use to increase response and drive profits. Yes, they add modestly to your mailing costs, but typically you need only a small increase in response to justify their cost and increase net income – especially when you use the insert to sell rather than to explain.

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