



Realtor Marketing Alert

8 Ways to Use Direct Mail to Standout from the Competition

**MyNeighborhood
Agent.com**

Introduction

Tired of all those junk e-mails in your inbox? So is everyone else! That's why old-fashioned direct mail is coming back into vogue. And, there are deeper reasons why direct mail marketing is coming back. It really pays off!

The Direct Marketing Association came up with some interesting research. First, each dollar (\$1.00) spent in direct marketing generates about seven dollars (\$7.00) of sales. That is a stellar return. Second, about 66% of consumers say they have purchased something from a direct mailing. Third, response rates for direct mail soar way past electronic mail - a huge 4.4% for direct mail versus only 0.12% for electronic mail. Fourth, when advertising costs are measured on a per lead or per order basis, direct mail comes in as the least expensive approach. These are impressive statistics, especially for those who don't wish to waste their advertising dollars.

There are a number of reasons why direct mail marketing is becoming increasingly more popular. It shares many advertising attributes with electronic mail: responsiveness, marketing integration, brand construction, offer presentation, tracking, personalization, and targeting. However, direct mail offers additional attributes that electronic mail does not. Direct mail is tangible; recipients can actually touch and hold your mailing, and that in itself engenders a certain trust that electronic mail

cannot trigger. Direct mail is increasingly visible. As more advertisers switch to electronic mailings, street mailboxes are less "stuffed," and your own direct mail has less competition in that street mailbox. And, it's longer lasting. Touchable direct mail doesn't just disappear by tapping the "delete" button.

Direct mail, because of its many unique advantages, is ideal for staying in touch with your contact base. It's attractive and personal. A well-strategized postcard mailing can keep "former" customers front-and-center as either "current" customers or excellent "lead" generators. Carefully placed calls-for-action in your mailings can keep your contacts inspired to stay in touch with you, and to think of you in a positive way.

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Realtors are uniquely positioned to take advantage of direct mail. Realtors have owner names and street addresses already in their property databases, and it's usually quite accurate because it comes from local property records. Compared to other marketing approaches, postcard marketing is not only more lucrative, but it's also "made to order" for the real estate industry.

Here are eight how-to tips to help you bring the benefits of postcard direct mail marketing to your business, and realize the increased returns that come from it.



Tip 1 Grow Your List

How should you go about building your mailing list? The trick is to have an “open” mindset. What you want is to have everyone that can *give* you new business and *also* everyone who might be able to *send* you business on that list. The idea here is to generate leads and referrals. Every individual is fair game to be put on your mailing list, after all, they might know someone - who knows someone - who knows someone - you get the picture! Wouldn't it be a shame if one day you ran across a good friend who wasn't on your mailing list and who said to you, “Wow, I sure wish I had known you were in real estate; my dear friend just purchased a new home!” Hearing that kind of comment can be depressing. It's a fact that everyone on that mailing list is, in a manner of speaking, an advertiser or promoter for you - so the more, the better.

Here are some actionable tips that will get you started in the right direction.

- ◇ First, make a list of every single person you know. Think of online social and professional circles, family and personal connections, open-house sign-in sheets, website inquiries, e-mail signatures, attendance events, incentive promotions, etc.
- ◇ Second, be sure that the mailing list is directed to an actual person, and not just to a street address. You really want to avoid addressing mail to “occupant.” Using a real name gives your mailing a nice personal touch, and the recipient is more likely to take a moment to see what the mailing says.
- ◇ Third, schedule a time, at least monthly, to groom your mailing lists. Delete dead-end contacts, and add new ones. After all, if your mailing list isn't growing, it's probably slowly dying. Also, be sure to keep contact information current. People do move around; keep on top of that. You don't want to waste printing and postage costs.

In corporate circles, a mailing list is considered “proprietary” information - a very valuable and jealously guarded corporate asset, perhaps the most valuable asset the corporation has. After all, mailing lists generate much of tomorrow's business. Take good care of your mailing lists, and groom them as befitting the golden goose that is going to lay those golden eggs for you tomorrow. Mailing lists are money in the bank. No wonder they are guarded so carefully.



Tip 2 Postcard Design

When it comes to direct mailings, postcards beat letters hands-down. Postcards are not only more cost effective, but they are much more visible because there is no envelope that needs to be opened. Immediately and without effort, the recipient and anyone else who touches your postcard sees your messaging - mail processing, the local mailman, and possibly friends and visitors to the home or office of your contact. At a glance the viewer takes in your picture, your contact information, and your graphics and text. Being printed on heavier paper stock, they are also more durable than a letter. Because of that, your “advertising” lasts much longer. They’re easier to handle and pass back and forth. And that’s exactly what you hope will happen. As more people end up handling and viewing your postcards, your mailing will produce more leads.

Here are some things that you can do to get a lot more “bang for your buck” from your postcard mailings.

- ◇ Use a medium-sized postcard size to maximize your messaging while still getting the less expensive postal rates for postcards. A “4x6” postcard is compact and easy to handle, carries more information than a 3x5, and yet still qualifies for the lower postal rates.
- ◇ Design your contact information into *both* sides of the postcard. Be sure to provide your phone numbers, street address, e-mail address, website, and company information.
- ◇ A friendly, pleasant picture of you is de rigueur. Have several different photo-shots of yourself, and vary them among your mailings. This will keep your picture looking “fresh” in the eye of your beholder.
- ◇ Eye-catching graphics are the rage, and for a reason. Humans are visual beings. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words? Your graphics need to be attractive and pleasant to behold. Many times postcards are kept and laid aside just because the graphics are so eye-catching. That keeps your postcards from going into the trash.
- ◇ Keep your text simple and direct. It is probably best to have only one message per postcard. That way the postcard design, graphics and text can be themed in such a manner that the contents “leap out” at the viewer.

These design tips, effectively executed, will ensure that you get maximum effect for your efforts. Every month, if that’s your cycle, your contacts will receive a friendly, eye-catching reminder that you are thinking of them. People like that. They like to feel that they are important to you, and that you are indeed thinking of them. In return, in their minds they will make you important, and think about you often - as often as they get a postcard from you. Of course, that’s what you want. Take extra effort to make that postcard eye-catching, themed with you as the “brand,” and messaged with something of friendly value to your contact. Remember, that postcard acts as your representative to your contacts. You want that postcard to shine. Not sure where to start when it comes to design? There are Websites like [MyNeighborhoodAgent.com](https://www.mynighborhoodagent.com) that have hundreds of beautifully designed postcards just ready for you to add your personal touch.

Tip 3 Develop a Schedule

There's a saying from the old school, "It takes three mailings to get their permanent attention." The first mailing gets thrown in the trash. The second mailing gets glanced at, and then thrown in the trash. However, when someone receives the third mailing, they say, "Um, I've seen this before," and they then give it some serious attention. Now this might be a bit of an exaggeration but it really does come down to trust. Everyone ignores the random knock at the door after all, it could be a salesman! But anyone repeatedly "knocking at the door" will get the full, undivided attention of the householder. When they do give your postcard serious attention, they're curious. They want to know what is so important that you are repeatedly mailing them. And that's when they notice your picture and contact information. They can put a friendly face on it now. They know what you do - that you're a professional Realtor. They are becoming acclimatized to you as a reliable part of their daily routine, even of their household. Now it's starting to happen for you. Your network is beginning to grow.

- ◇ The best scheduling for Realtors is probably monthly. Quarterly mailings will not be frequent enough to tap into whatever's happening in a dynamic marketplace. And anything more than monthly could become cost prohibitive.
- ◇ Prep early to maintain consistency in your monthly mailings. If it takes roughly ten days to review and update your mailing list, and then get the mailing out, start your prep at least ten days before the targeted mailing date. You want to keep on cycle to the best of your ability.
- ◇ Incorporate events and holidays into your mailings. You don't have to mail out exactly every 30 days. Thanksgiving Day might be your November mailing. Holiday messaging is both important and lucrative. As you know, all the retailers do it, and they do it for a good reason. It pays off! Purse strings tend to get loosened during

Your mailings are so important. They are the lifeblood of your business, and sending them out regularly is, so to speak, the heartbeat of your business. Make your mailings a priority. No matter whether you are between deals or swamped in offers, those postcards need to go out, month after month – call it your "marketing heartbeat."



Tip 4 Stay In Touch

In today's highly competitive economy, staying in touch with customers is vital to staying in business. Of course, your messaging to your contacts has to contain value; it can't be frivolous and "just to send something or touch base." Your mailing has to contain something that your contact can use in a practical way. Ideally you want your contact to come to look forward to your next mailing. One of the best ways to accomplish this is to have your postcards address unanswered concerns in your contact's mind - things they are thinking but not voicing. There are very effective ways that periodic postcard mailings do this.

- ◇ Your contact will wonder if you are going to be a pleasant person to have in their life. Be nice. Observe the simple basics - please, thank-you, you're welcome, etc. Start the relationship with a nice personalized letter, and then follow it up with ongoing postcards of interest.
- ◇ Your contact will always wonder if you're still around. After all, there's a lot of turnover in the real estate business. Your postcard mailings will reassure them that you are dependable and here to stay.
- ◇ Your contact will quietly wonder if you are a "successful" Realtor. Using postcard mailings to keep them abreast of your listings and sales quietly reassures your list that you are not just one of those fly-by-night agents that has a few transactions and then drops out of the business.
- ◇ Your contact will want their relationship with you to be worth their time, i.e., of value. Talk about your professional successes - any legal, tax information, or calendar events important to homeowners - neighborhood happenings - zoning or construction developments that might affect their home's value. Your contact will not only come to value your postcards, but they will probably keep your postcards as handy reference material.

By following these action points diligently, you will quietly and effectively brand yourself as a valuable resource for the people on your list. Your postcard mailings will do that work for you. Every time your contact receives a postcard, you will be underlining to your contact that you are indeed a successful professional who is trustworthy and who can be counted upon to take the initiative in maintaining a relationship of value.

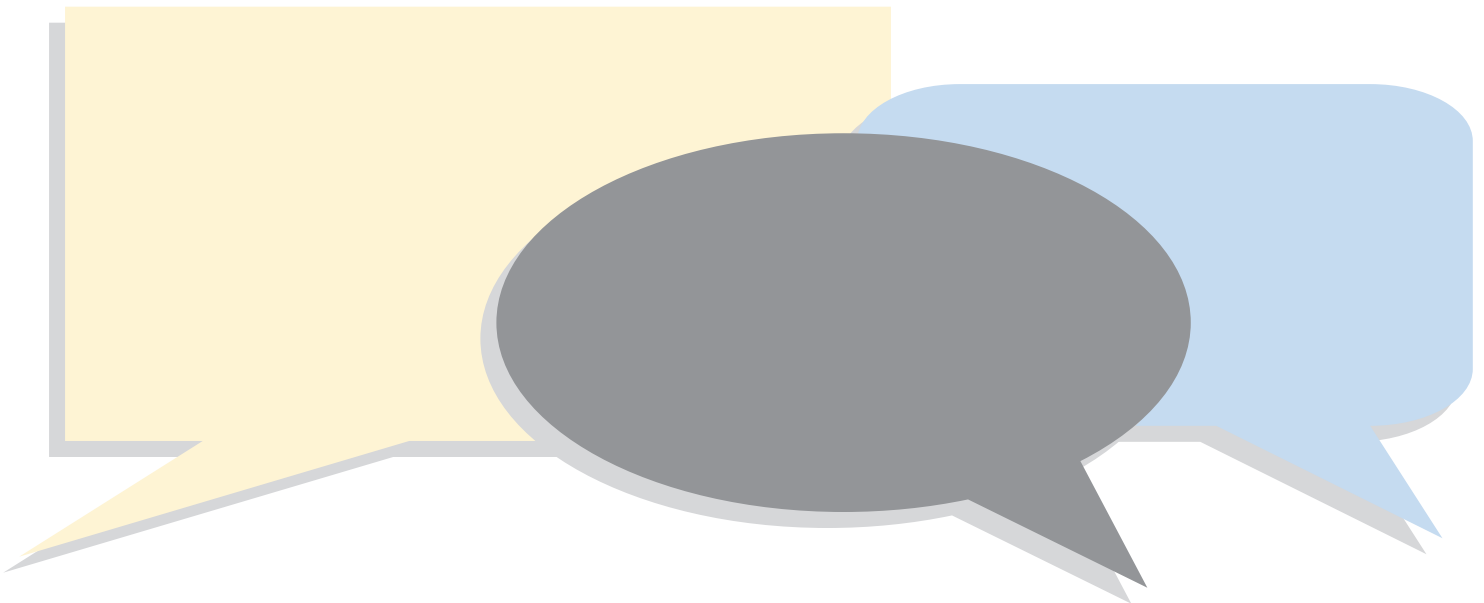


Tip 5 Referral Marketing

It's so easy for a professional Realtor to feel alone! After all, you alone are responsible for building your own business in the middle of a lot of competition. But wait, there's good news! You can build a big team to get behind you without paying any salaries. Think about it. Getting a good referral is like someone taking you by the hand and guiding you to an ATM machine. The bigger your network, the more the referrals keep flowing in. It's like money in the bank. And, outgoing referrals to other professionals can be equally profitable, either through referral fees or friendly referrals back to you. What you need is a nice big network of supporters constantly referring business leads to you. Here are your action points.

- ◇ Brand yourself. You *are* the Brand! Make sure that when you work to build your brand you come up with a set of skills that sets you apart from the competition. You want to stand out in your client's mind. You want them to think of you as either a Neighborhood expert, or an Education relocation expert, or a Downsizing expert, etc. Branding yourself as an "expert" in something helps tremendously in standing out from all the competition.
- ◇ Market yourself, "the Brand," consistently. Schedule your mailings and make sure they include interesting graphics, a topic of the day, and - of course - a nice, pleasant picture of yourself together with your contact info and an invitation to call.
- ◇ Ask for referrals nicely. Nothing like old-fashioned courtesy. Please - thank you - have a good day - you're welcome - just the simple basics. Always inquire after one's health; people like to be reassured that you are interested in more than just their business. And, always remind your contacts of what you do and ask if there's anything that you "can do for them?" People like to help, and they also like to be helped.

When you do something for one of your clients, do a *superb* job. They will trumpet it to the world. And you can make it a postcard mailing topic. You know, "we are pleased to announce the purchase/sale of ..." It's amazing how little pieces of information like that can delight your mailing list, and get those calls coming in. It beats canvassing the neighborhood and cold calling at endless doors, doesn't it?



Tip 6 Selective Farming

Being a Neighborhood Expert is now a big part of being a residential Realtor. It's increasingly difficult to engineer an efficient real estate business without being an expert in a geographical area or a market niche. Those who do not become experts of some sort spend most of their time just desperately searching for leads wherever they can find them. Being in the Expert business saves you time - and time, for a busy Realtor, happens to be big money. Here's some good ways to get started:

- ◇ Find a neighborhood or market niche that is being ignored by the competition. Trying to farm an area that is already being farmed can be an uphill challenge. If all the first-level available farms are taken, then create your farm with select pieces of other farms or by a property type specialty. You want to be a "unique" Expert.
- ◇ Learn all you can about the farm that you are going to create. Everything! As you know, a little tidbit of info that can seem so irrelevant at the moment can in fact tie you into a big piece of business. Know your farm better than anyone else on the planet - after all, you want to be the acknowledged Expert.
- ◇ Cast your net. Get those mailings going. Find out who the neighborhood gossips are, and spend some time schmoozing with them. Neighborhood gossips are like the old telephone operators - they listen in on everything and will love to keep you informed.

If you do a great job of setting up your farm and taking care of it, your mailing list will eventually give you a promotion. Instead of thinking of you as "the Neighborhood Expert," they will come to think of you as "their go-to real estate resource."



Tip 7 Open Houses

Sitting the typical real estate open house has two purposes. Getting leads for business is first and foremost. Pleasing the seller by demonstrating that “something is being done” to sell the property comes in as a distant second. An open house is your stage to meet the public. On that open house stage, your goal is to meet the public in person, make new friends, and garner some good leads. If that open house stage turns out to be a good lead generator, selling it too quickly could be a disadvantage for both you and your seller.

Here are some ways to maximize lead generation at your open houses.

- ◇ Drive traffic to your open house with postcard mailings to your prospecting circles, specialty farms, spheres of influence, and surrounding neighbors. If in doubt, add to the mailing list. Remember the “six degrees of separation” principle.
- ◇ Showcase yourself in your house marketing materials. Be especially prepared to answer questions such as - “Why should I use you as either a seller’s agent or a buyer’s agent?” In responding with the advantages, be sure to distinguish yourself and your company from the competition.
- ◇ Have a small stack of postcards at the ready. Oversized postcards can carry a lot of information and serve excellent duty as “super-business” cards. Offer some for their friends, too. Don’t be stingy. Postcards are relatively inexpensive and give a lot of value for the money.
- ◇ Ask for their “best” contact information. Do NOT ask them for their “contact” info, but for their “best” contact info. Nobody wants to give their contact info, but everyone just loves to give their “best” contact info.

Handling an open house with the conscious expectation of making new friends and generating leads is the best way to actually make that happen. Follow the tips: drive traffic, showcase yourself, have postcards at the ready, and always ask for their “best” contact info. If you do this faithfully, invariably you will walk away from that open house with interesting new friends and solid leads to work on.



Tip 8 Avoid Mistakes

These actionable tips covered so far will keep your postcard marketing strategy on track and provide you with lead after workable lead. However, Realtors can get quite busy at certain times, and then important things like continued advertising can get inadvertently pushed to the side. When this happens, and the busy times dry up, Realtors can find themselves experiencing a “dry spell.” Avoiding certain mistakes can keep these dry spells far removed. Here are a few that you can take action on immediately.

- ◇ Make your postcard marketing an absolute priority. Remember - the transaction that you are working on right now is the “golden egg,” but postcard marketing is the “golden goose.” You don’t want to get so focused on the deal of the moment that you lose sight of where your deals are coming from.
- ◇ When you are working on your postcard marketing, spend quality time on design. Designing does not come out well when it is treated as an afterthought. Look into the future and strategize how your overall designs will flow through your successive mailings. Make sure that all the points covered about postcard design are handled, and that each postcard mailing has a call-to-action. Many times that call-to-action will be an invitation to call you. After all, that’s what you want - your contacts calling you with questions or information.
- ◇ After you have created your mailing list, the work on your mailing list isn’t done. It needs to be constantly reviewed and updated. It’s rewarding to track your results; that demonstrates that your postcard marketing is actually working for you. When a call comes in, gently probe as to what prompted that call.
- ◇ A postcard marketing strategy doesn’t stand by itself. In your mailings, take the time and space on the postcard to nudge your contacts to various sections of your website. When you do that, your postcard, over time, will act similar to a blog constantly calling your contacts to you in various ways.

Following up on these strategies will ensure that your postcard strategy doesn’t fall victim to busy times. Block out time in your planning calendar just for postcard management. “Design” is foremost, and needs to be made an essential part of your postcard development. A mailing list is a “living thing” so be sure to take the time to periodically groom it. Since postcards can carry only a certain amount of information, make certain that each postcard mailing contains a “call-to-action” for your contact to reach out to you or visit your website. It’s on your website that you have the room to insert plenty of information and invitations for your contact to surf. In a way, over a number of mailings, your postcards should function as “mini” versions of your website.



Conclusion

Postcard marketing is “made-to-order” for the real estate industry, and every professional Realtor should be using it. Used wisely, for lead generation it beats any other form of advertising in marketing yourself and your services to the public.

Everyone has heard the cliché, “work smarter, not harder.” Those Realtors incorporating the postcard mailing approach into their businesses will find themselves happily working the unending leads and referrals produced by these postcards. Realtors who do not utilize it are at risk of spending their time finding leads and referrals the hard way - shoe leather and cold calling. Let your postcards do this canvassing work for you, and give yourself the joy of doing what you are trained to do - the actual negotiating and closing of real estate transactions. That’s why you went into the business, right!

Let your postcards do this canvassing work for you, and give yourself the joy of doing what you are trained to do...

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