

# A guide for producing successful Direct Mail campaigns

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# INTRODUCTION

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Here at PostSmart, we understand that your energy is focused on growing your business but when it comes to reaching out to your customers, finding the time and resources can be tough.

That's where your dedicated PostSmart team come in, we are fully committed to helping your business produce great direct mail that will help you stand out from the competition and grow. With this free guide you can discover all the tools you need to plan, develop and implement a successful direct mail campaign, from start to finish.

For more information contact [sales@postsmart.co.uk](mailto:sales@postsmart.co.uk)

## GETTING STARTED

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Here are 5 simple steps for planning a campaign or series of campaigns, which will help you to determine the best outcomes from your budget.

## 1. WHAT TO SEND

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Consider what are you sending. Customers prefer to receive brochures, catalogues, appeals, welcome packs, bills and statements, and loyalty rewards by mail. They like digital channels to hear about news and updates, confirmations or follow-up messages.

## 2. THE MESSAGE

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Customers see mail as a communication of authority and they take it seriously. Think about what message you want to convey and what you want the customer to think about your brand as a result of receiving it.

## 3. INTEGRATED CHANNELS

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Mail and digital work together in complementary ways. As a result of receiving mail 92% of customers went online to visit the company's website and 87% purchased online.

## 4. YOUR PLAN

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Think about the role of the individual communication in the wider context of a years' activity to ensure that you consider what the customer is going to receive from you over an extended period of time.



## 5. YOUR OBJECTIVE

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Have a clear idea about what you want your direct mail to achieve e.g. an increase in footfall, online sales or customer loyalty. If you have one clear goal for the mail you are sending the more likely it will be to succeed.

## SUMMARISE

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Summarise these steps in a plan that you can refer to later.

## SET CLEAR FINANCIAL GOALS

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- ⚡ To determine the best outcomes from your budget, here are 4 further steps to consider. By setting clear financial goals from the start, you can work out what you should spend against what incremental business it will deliver.

## 1. FINANCIAL

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- ⚡ What return on your investment do you want to achieve?  
If you are spending £5,000, what money do you need to make back to pay for the activity and make additional revenue?

## 2. VOLUME

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- ⚡ How many customers or potential customers do you need to reach to make the sort of financial impact you want, is it 100's or is it 1,000's? How many sales, how many visits to your store or your website?



## 3. RESPONSE

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- ⚡ How many customers do you think will respond? This helps you to plan how many enquiries, registrations or leads you can handle and what's realistic for you. You might do a small test volume to start with to gauge response rates.

## 4. FULFILMENT

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- ⚡ What will you need to do to service the responses – phone back, send something out, process vouchers? Plan ahead so you can manage the outcome.



**Work out your main goal and keep them in mind  
throughout your direct mail development.**



## FIND THE RIGHT AUDIENCE

⚡ One of the most important factors for the success of your direct mail is the right targeting. This will have the single biggest impact on how effective your activity will be.

### TALKING TO EXISTING CUSTOMERS?

If you have a database, decide which customers you want to talk to.

- Consider what relationship you have with them.
- What have they ordered or what business have they done with you before?
- What are they worth to you?
- What offers or services might they be interested in from you now?
- Are you able to find a group of customers who look similar that might be interested in the same offer or service?

### WANT TO FIND NEW CUSTOMERS?

If you are looking to acquire new customers there are a number of ways you can do this.

- Think about what your customers look like, e.g. what age or gender are they and what income do they have?
- Where do they live? What sort of houses are they likely to live in? Which streets and areas are they located in?
- How many children might they have or are their children grown up and left home?



**Draw a simple picture in your mind of your specific customer segments. Give them a name to help you pinpoint who they are.**

## MAKE THE BEST USE OF DATA

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Whether you are using your own data or buying new data, these are the steps you should follow to ensure the data is of the best quality, so you are maximising your budget.

## STEP 1

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- ⚡ Is your data accurate, complete and up to date? You can check this by looking through your data but equally your mailing house (if you are using one) may be able to help you cleanse your data.

## STEP 2

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- ⚡ If you are buying data as well as mailing your own customers, you don't want to mail the same person more than once because their name appears on both files. Ensure you have thought about how to avoid duplicated data. A mailing house can help with this.

## STEP 3

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- ⚡ Suppression files should be used. Suppression files help to reduce wastage by removing deceased persons, people who've moved (gone-aways), those on Mailing Preference Service (who have opted out of receiving direct mail) and people who are a credit risk. All of this can be done by a mailing house and will cut down on wasted mailing pieces.

## STEP 4

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- ⚡ Is your data held in the right format that can be used by a third party? Is each piece of address information held in a separate field e.g. Mr, Bob Test, 32 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1. It is important to have clearly separated fields for mailing.

## STEP 5

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- ⚡ Using any data, you should be aware of the rules of the Data Protection Act and GDPR. More information on GDRP go to the Regulation section of this guide (page 70) or visit [www.ico.ie](http://www.ico.ie).





**Keeping data up to date avoids  
wastage and keeps your costs down.**

## WORKING OUT YOUR MESSAGE

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60% of people say that good advertising mail helped to keep the sender's business top of mind. Getting your message across clearly and with impact is a key factor on the effectiveness of your mailing. On the next few pages are some of the key creative principles which, if you apply them, will help your campaign succeed.

## 1. KEY MESSAGE

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⚡ **This is the most important part of any communication!**

The key message(s) should be clear in all of your direct mail communications. What is the single most important thing that you want the audience to know? What do you want them to do next?

## 2. ATTENTION

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### Get the reader's attention!!!

- ⚡ Your mailing pack has to stand out from the crowd and make people read it. Have an eye-catching headline on the outer envelope for example, 'free gift' or 'exclusive deal'.

## 3. INTEREST

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- ⚡ Capture the customer's interest by demonstrating a clear benefit to them.

## 4. DESIRE

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- ⚡ You can inspire desire by putting a limit on the offer you are giving e.g. there are a limited number that can be sold or this offer expires in one month. You can also show how other people have benefited, using their stories.

## 5. CONVICTION

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- ⚡ Providing evidence is a good way to show other people that your claims are genuine: provide customer testimonials, money-back guarantees or scientific proof of your offer.

## 6. ACTION

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- ⚡ The best call to action is written plainly and precisely so that the customer is clear what they need to do next to benefit. Give a clear deadline for customers to respond to and be clear about how you want them to respond: visit, call, go online or use a reply device.





**Make sure you have worked out your key Message(s) first. The rest will follow.**

## CHOOSE A FORMAT

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- ⚡ There are some standard physical formats within a direct mail pack, which have been tried and tested and do very well. You need to consider what elements to include in your mailing pack to ensure you get the best results. It is important to keep costs down whilst still getting your message across.

## THE OUTER ENVELOPE

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- ⚡ The outer envelope is the first thing the customer will see and needs to encourage them to open it. Make sure you have a headline that grabs them, and entices them to open the letter. Remember to check the zone around the window that you need to leave clear.

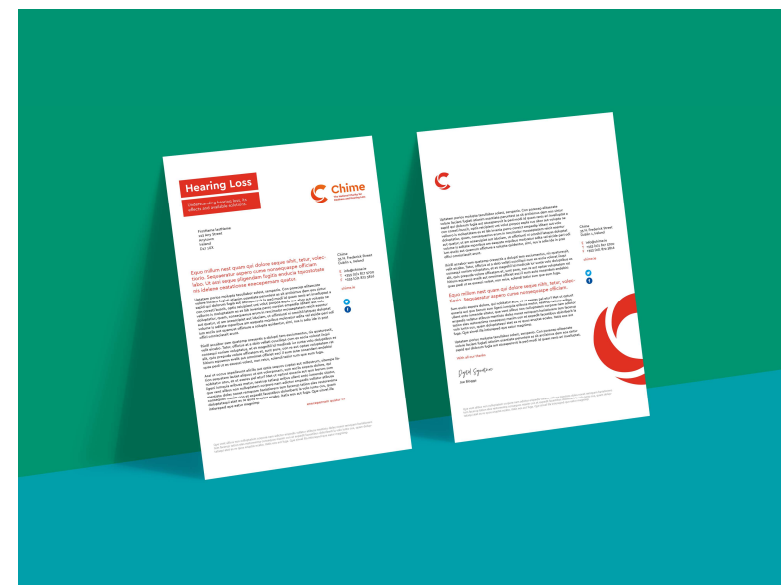


## SALES/ INTRODUCTION LETTER



A letter is still a powerful way of delivering a personalised message to a customer.

They value the fact their name and address is on it and if you are able to tailor the letter to them, they will find what you are saying more relevant and timely.



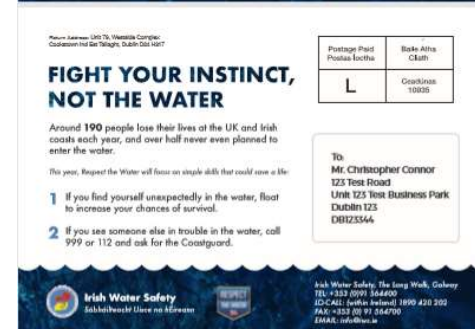
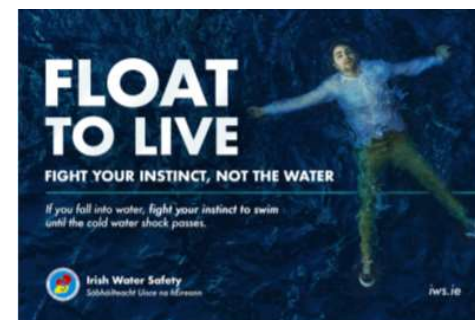
## LEAFLETS / ENCLOSURES

- ⚡ In addition to your letter, would your message best be described by including some additional information, pictures of your product or a description of your offer in more detail or upcoming events and/or fundraising activities?



## REPLY ENVELOPES/ POSTCARDS

- ⚡ People still like to get in touch by post, if you have a business reply address they can use. If you don't plan to use one make sure you are clear about how you want them to respond, e.g. visit, phone, web or email.





**Consider how many elements you need to get  
your message across – and KEEP IT SIMPLE!**

## TECHNIQUES TO BOOST RESPONSE

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There are some useful techniques that have been used by marketers over many years that work really well to boost response to direct mail.

These are just a few which you might like to use to help your direct mail campaign's performance.



## TESTIMONIALS

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- ⚡ If you have customers who have said great things about you use these to enhance what you say about yourselves. People trust what other customers say.

## LIFT LETTER

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- ⚡ This is a letter that helps to reinforce the message. It can be written by a third party e.g. an independent person who endorses your product or service. This can often carry more weight than what you say.

## GUARANTEES

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- ⚡ Can you offer some sort of guarantee or charter that your company can honour to give consumers confidence in you?

## INCENTIVES

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- ⚡ Can you offer some form of incentive or special offer which gives the customer an extra reason to respond?

## GETTING YOUR PACK READY

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- ⚡ Once you have decided on a message you can work with a printer who will help you find the most cost effective way of producing your mailing. You will want to obtain more than one quote to ensure you are getting the best deal, but it is worth considering quality as part of the package, as poor quality can affect response rates.

## FIND A PRINTER

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- ⚡ It is best to look for a selection of printers before you start so you can ensure you are getting a competitive quote.

## DISCUSS YOUR NEEDS

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- ⚡ Discuss your plans with your printer. They are experienced at helping find the most cost effective ways of producing direct mail and should be able to give you good advice.

## COMPARE PRICES

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- ⚡ Once you have asked for competitive prices and analysed the answers you have received, select the printer that you would like to work with. This might be price-based but also based on the provider who can give you the best service, or had the most value to add to your request.



## PREPARE YOUR PRINT

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- ⚡ The printer will tell you how they want the material you have created provided and in what formats. Always obtain a proof once you have supplied the artwork, so you can check that the bigger print run will be right.



**Advances in digital print technology make personalisation much easier and cost effective on smaller print runs.**

## WORKING WITH A MAILING HOUSE

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- ⚡ Working with a mailing house to ensure your mail is handled correctly can help everything go smoothly. They can also help you choose the best form of postage for your needs and therefore save you money.

## WORKING WITH A MAILING HOUSE

1. BRIEF THE MAILING HOUSE WITH YOUR NEEDS – A WRITTEN BRIEF IS BEST

2. GET THEM TO TELL YOU HOW TO SUPPLY YOUR DATA AND PRINT

3. ASK TO SEE PRINTED SAMPLES BEFORE THEY ARE SENT OUT SO YOU CAN CHECK THE QUALITY

4. AGREE ON THE ORDER YOU WANT THE CONTENTS TO BE ENCLOSED IN THE ENVELOPE

5. CHECK A FULLY PRINTED AND ENCLOSED SAMPLE

6. AGREE THE BEST FORM OF POSTAGE FOR YOUR VOLUME



**Get the mailing house to provide you with a briefing form to help you give them the right Information.**



## THE CORRECT POSTAGE

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- ⚡ You have a number of different postage options, depending on the volumes and type of mailing pack you are sending out. These can be discussed with Royal Mail or An Post; equally, any printer or mailing house should be able to assist you and ensure you get the most for your money. This checklist covers the areas that you should consider when selecting the right postage for your direct mail.

## YOUR CHECKLIST

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-  **Timing.** Consider when you want the mail to arrive.
-  **Size & weight.** Larger or heavier mailing packs are more expensive to deliver, so make sure you think about this when you are designing your creative and choosing your formats

## YOUR CHECKLIST

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**Machine readable.** If you are using a mailing house, a machine readable font will make sure they can process your.




**Volume discount.** The bigger your mailing volume, the more you might qualify for greater discounts. Advertising Mail Letters mail automatically, keeping the costs down.



## YOUR CHECKLIST

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-  **Sortation discount.** If you use a mailing house to help you sort your mail, again you can get a discount. The mailing house will charge you for sorting your mail but this may still save you money in the long run so weigh up the costs.



**Think about postage needs as early as possible.**

There are many ways you can save money.

## EVALUATING SUCCESS

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The wonderful thing about mail is that you can measure whether it has worked for you or not. What response did you generate, how many customers did you convert to sale? If you accurately collect the data (using a code or coupon for example) you can understand whether the expenditure was worthwhile and this will help you decide on future investment levels in mail.

# EVALUATION

## 3 USEFUL METHODS

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### GOALS

- Make sure you go back and review what your original objectives for the mailing were.
- What were you asking customers to do - go online, visit your store or purchase from a catalogue?
- What's most important to you to measure -- sales, size of sale, visits or appointments made?

2

### OPTIMISATION

- What is great about mail is that you can learn about what does or does not work.
- You can see if one mailing has worked better than another.
- And this helps you evaluate what you do in the future.
- And make further improvements to what you do.

3

### TRACKING

- Make sure you can track your responses.
- Check your website can measure how many more visits are coming in.
- Check that when a customer phones you record where they heard about you.
- Think about how you handle more demand.

# EVALUATION



## KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Try and measure your original objective and learn from what you did.

## EVALUATING TOOLS

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There are evaluation tools that you might find helpful in working out how your mailing has performed. In fact, there are a number of ways you might want to understand how your investment in mail has worked for your business.

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

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Return on investment is a simple sum, which considers what you spent on your print and distribution and what you got back in return. So, you take the total revenue generated minus the cost of your mailing, and divide this by the cost to work out the return on every pound spent. For example, a ROI of 2:1 means you generated €2 for every €1 spent.

## BEHAVIOUR

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Understand how your customers are responding to your mailing. Did they go online, did they phone? This helps with future planning but also tells you where you need to invest in the future.



## RESPONSE RATES

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If you know the likely response you will get to a mailing then you can plan for your business. If you know you generate a certain number of enquiries, then you can understand what volume of mail you need in the future to reach your business goal.

## CREATIVE IMPACT

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Over time you can determine, if you are using more than one creative message, which is the one that works best for you. What offers are right? Do you have seasonal offers that work at different times of the year? The more you hone your approach the better results you can yield.

## DATA

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By using different data sources you can understand which sets of customers respond to you better. Once you know this, it can be simple to find more customers that look like your good customers and therefore improve your response rates further.

# EVALUATION



**Evaluate what you can to learn for your future mailings.**

The more you understand the more you can improve.

# GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

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The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information of individuals within the European Union (EU). For processing personal information all marketers, whether they use mail or an electronic medium, **MUST** follow the guidelines of the GDPR.

## 6 LEGAL GROUND FOR PROCESSING DATA:

1. **Consent:** Processed lawfully, fairly & in a transparent manner
2. Performance of a contract
3. Compliance with legal obligations
4. Necessary to protect vital interests
5. Performance of task in public interests
6. **Purpose of legitimate interest**

**Two are especially  
valid for direct mail**

## LEGITIMATE INTEREST

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GDPR states “...The processing of personal data for direct marketing purposes may be regarded as carried out for a \*legitimate interest.”

\*except where such interests are overridden by interests or rights & freedoms of the data subject.

## LEGITIMATE INTEREST ASSESSMENT (LIA)

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You must conduct a Legitimate Interest Assessment:

1. Identify your legitimate interest

- *To seek funds to further cause*



2. Determine whether the processing is **NECESSARY**

- *Consider Direct Mail Appropriate*



*Example shown based on a charity for the purposes of illustration*



## LEGITIMATE INTEREST ASSESSMENT (LIA)

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### 3. Conduct a balancing TEST

- *Reasonable expectations*
- *Limited data to be processed*
- *Previous relationship*
- *Opt –Out available*

### 4. Document for evidence

## LEGITIMATE INTEREST ASSESSMENT (LIA)

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For more information go to Information Commissions Office.

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/legitimate-interests/>

**Disclaimer:** Information shown has been sourced from industry bodies and are correct at time of publication.

Information shown as a guide and we advise you consult your local ICO for more information.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND DIRECT MAIL

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GDPR has a new principle of Accountability.

Its about demonstrating compliance.

- ⚡ Good governance
- ⚡ Good record keeping
- ⚡ Document evidence e.g. Direct Mail

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND DIRECT MAIL

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- ⚡ The data itself
- ⚡ Legal basis for processing
- ⚡ Records of due diligence undertaken
- ⚡ Permission statements & Privacy Policies
  - ⚡ Your own
  - ⚡ 3<sup>rd</sup> Party
- ⚡ Legitimate Interest Assessment
- ⚡ Evidence of consent

# ANY QUESTIONS?

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Information within this guide has been sourced from the following leading industry bodies:

- Royal Mail MarketResearch
- Mail and Digital Part 2
- Quandrangle
- DMA Advertising Mail Guide
- IDM the institute of direct and digital marketing