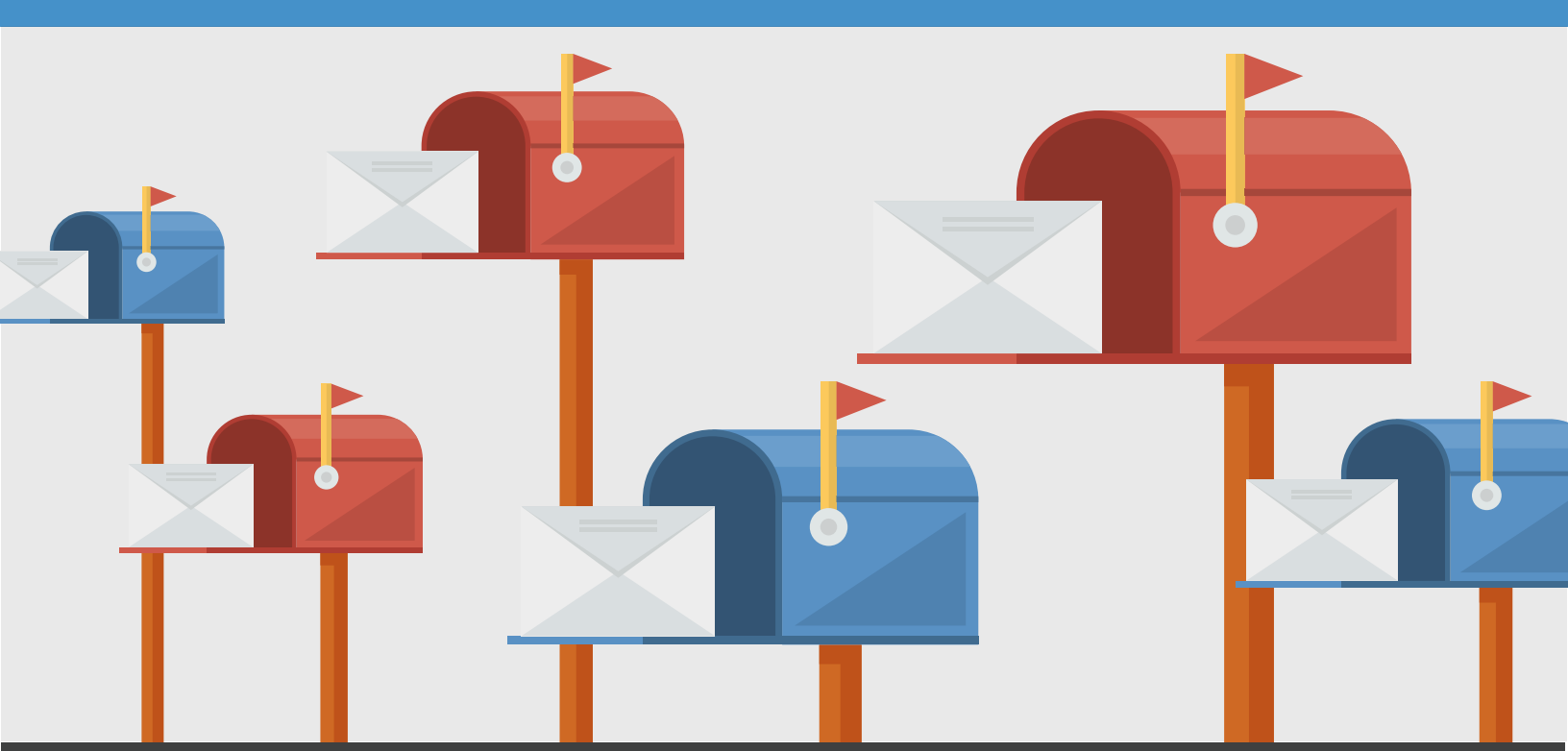


Push to Start: A Beginners Guide to Starting Automated Direct Mail



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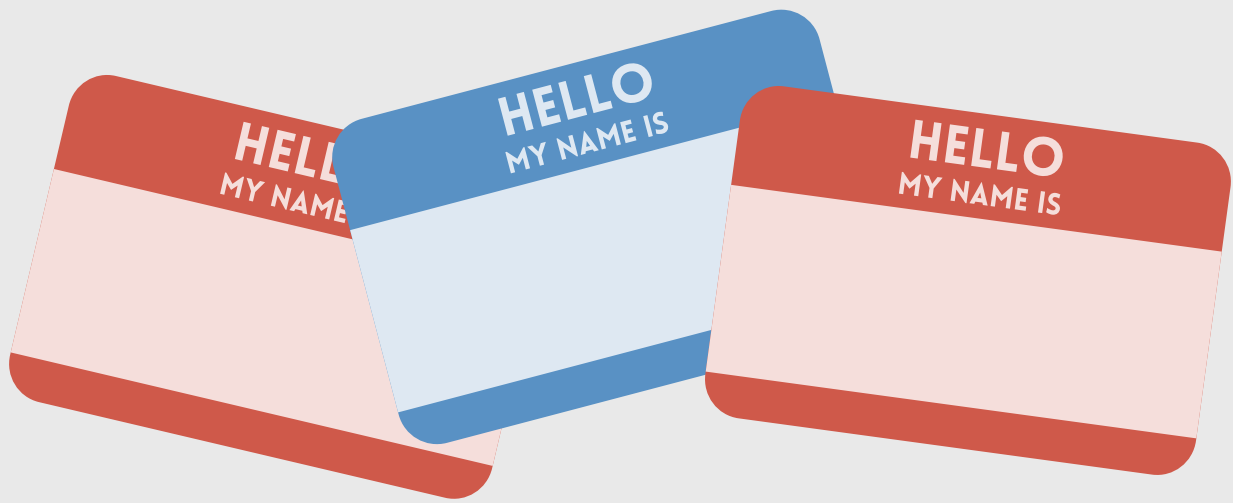


Of all marketing tactics, direct mail may be the most intimidating. Just getting started can seem daunting. These feelings lead many marketers to conclude that direct mail isn't worth the trouble. But instrumental advances in marketing technology have streamlined what once was an burdensome direct mail process.

Automated direct mail empowers marketers with an ability to reach prospects who are bombarded in the digital world – without the intense and complex labor once common in offline marketing.

With the support of technological efficiencies and intuitive software, executing an engaging direct mail campaign is easier than ever imaginable. What steps do you need to take to start an effective automated direct mail campaign? What key considerations do you need to make before pushing “Start?”





The Intersection of Automation and Personalization

Brands don't build relationships with prospects and customers speaking to a general audience. First and foremost, consumers expect to be addressed by their names. More importantly, they won't waste time reading anything that has little relevance to them. Tailoring any marketing material to a prospect's specific pain points and needs is essential to effective marketing.

Personalization makes your prospects feel catered to, creating a natural connection. Personalized marketing demonstrates your effort to speak to your prospect directly and tailor your communication to them. Personalization may seem like a pipedream that would take far too much effort to achieve. But with foresight and thoughtful strategy, you can scale your efforts to make the most of your time and resources.



Enter automation. Direct mail platforms can pull key information from your prospect lists and populate personalized mailers that could include:

- **Social media profile images**
- **Company logos**
- **Street views**

On top of specific messaging, these additional elements of personalization help you stand out from the typical mailer. Automation also saves you from scheduling each individual mailer. Integrating with CRM and other marketing software, direct mail automation allows you to define workflows that trigger sending a mailer to an individual based on actions they take within their buyer journey. Not only will this level of precision save you time, it will also position you to connect with a prospect at the ideal time.





Setting Up Your Campaign

No marketing campaign – direct mail or otherwise – will succeed without a clear objective and strategy. What is the goal of your campaign? Do you want to raise awareness of a new service offering? Are you trying to increase demo requests? In order to execute a successful campaign, you must first solidify your objective and running every decision through that lens.



Defining Your Audience

No marketing tactic can achieve ultimate success without a defined, targeted audience. If you try to market to everyone, in effect, you market to no one. Before you start any marketing campaign, you need to determine who the persona is you wish to target.

In addition to considering who you're marketing to, you also need to determine where your prospects are in their buyer's journey. Are they simply conducting initial research on broad topics or are they looking for specific solutions to solve their problems tomorrow? Persona development ensures that your efforts align with the right prospects, at the right time.

Crafting Your Message and Design

The most strategic, highest-performing marketing campaigns communicate a specific message to a specific audience. If you use a blanket message, how can you expect your mailer to resonate with a specific individual? After you've defined your target, establish a line of messaging that caters to their biggest pains.

From a design perspective, automated direct mail allows you to be much more efficient in crafting the look and feel that's best suited to your audience. Historically, you had to hire or partner with a designer. Now, direct mail providers offer hundreds of templates from which to choose. With a targeted message and complementary design, you're well on your way to executing a successful campaign.



Choosing a Printer

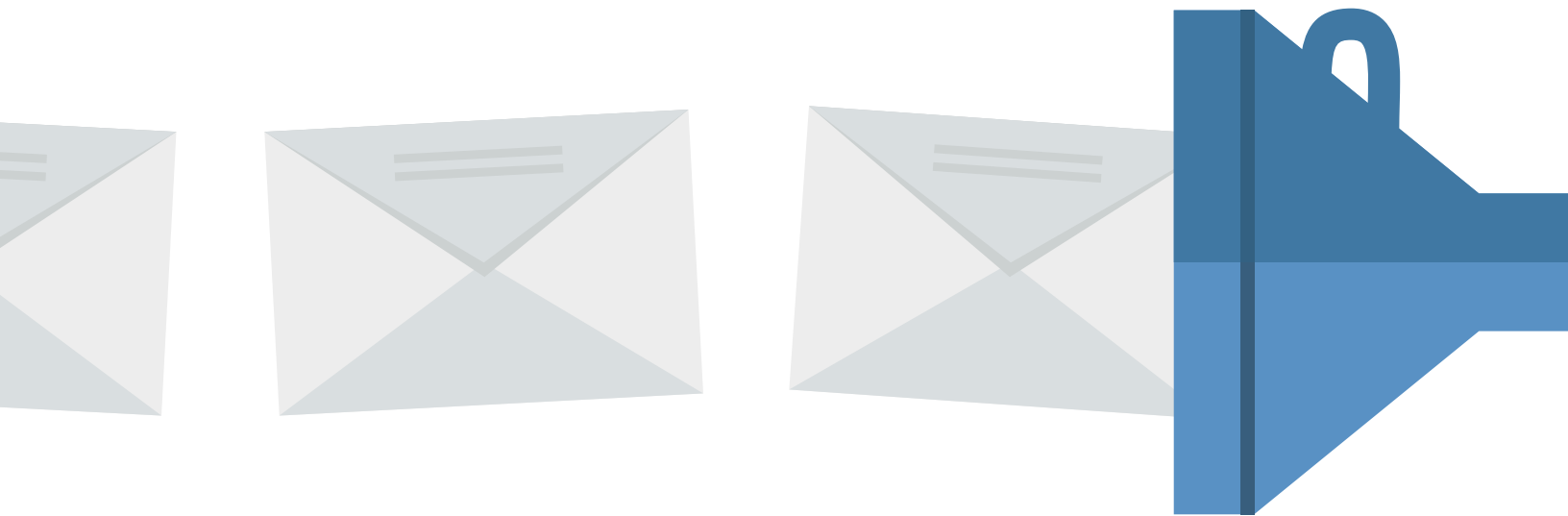
As with direct mail design, finding and working with a printer used to be a logistical nightmare. Every time you wanted to send a mailer, you had to work closely with your printer to manage your campaign. Automated direct mail platforms now take the onus of printing off of your plate. With the printing process in place, you can focus on scheduling or automating when to print and deliver your mailers to your prospects.

If you prefer to work with a printer directly, make sure choose one that can meet your needs. One of your greatest considerations is the quality of the printer. Ask for sample mailers they've printed in the past. Will the mailers they produce reflect the quality of your own services? Equally important is that you can look at a proof before your mailers are eventually sent to your prospects. If you have last minute changes or fixes, your printer must be able to implement them in a timely manner. Naturally, a printer's experience and reputation are important as well. A long-lasting business is typically a sign of quality work and happy customers.

Establishing a Rhythm

When it comes to the number of mailers to send and when, there is no magic number or calculation. However, there are best practices you should follow, and it all ties back to your objective and target persona. Are you looking to connect with a prospect who you've never communicated with before? Are you trying to engage your current customer base to improve retention? Are you trying to re-engage leads who never closed? The next section takes a deeper dive into considerations for each of these kinds of prospects.





Engaging Personas Throughout the Buyer's Journey

As you start incorporating direct mail into your marketing efforts, you should think about different types of mailers that focus on your prospects at varying stages of their journey. Whether someone is a fresh prospect, marketing qualified lead (MQL) or sales qualified lead (SQL), you have to cater to them accordingly.

You can also break the buyer's journey down by top-of-the-funnel (TOFU), middle-of-the-funnel (MOFU) and bottom-of-the-funnel (BOFU). Naturally, the types of content that perform best for prospects in each stage differ. Consider leading TOFU prospects to a landing page for a guide on a specific pain point of theirs. You could direct MOFU prospects to a quiz, eBook or case study specific to their needs. BOFU leads may respond best to a video that encourages a demo or assessment.



Connecting with a New Prospect

If you've never previously engaged with a prospect, send your recipient three mailers throughout your campaign. Your first direct mail piece should introduce your company, but most importantly, it must educate your prospect on a topic of interest. This prospect is likely still in the research phase, and may feel threatened if try to push a demo. This mistake is the equivalent of proposing on a first date. Don't waste your money on that ring.

Your last mailer could sensibly recommend that your prospect schedule a demo or consultation. At this stage, they should know what kind of solution they want, but are deciding between providers. The middle mailer falls somewhere in the middle – perhaps promoting a guide on determining the best solution for their needs.

How you schedule and space these three mailers depends on your sales cycle. If your cycle is relatively short, sending mailer every hour weeks may be suitable timing. If your sales cycle is longer, you'll want each mailer more time to breathe. Automated direct mail allows you to determine when to send a specific mailer based on actions your prospects take. This is always your ideal approach.



Re-Engaging a Lost Lead

Sometimes, your prospects simply aren't on the market for your service or product. Your previous efforts may not have been executed at the right time. Even if a prospect conducts research on how to address their pains, that doesn't mean they'll be compelled to put money toward a solution. Only when their pain becomes acute will they act on it.

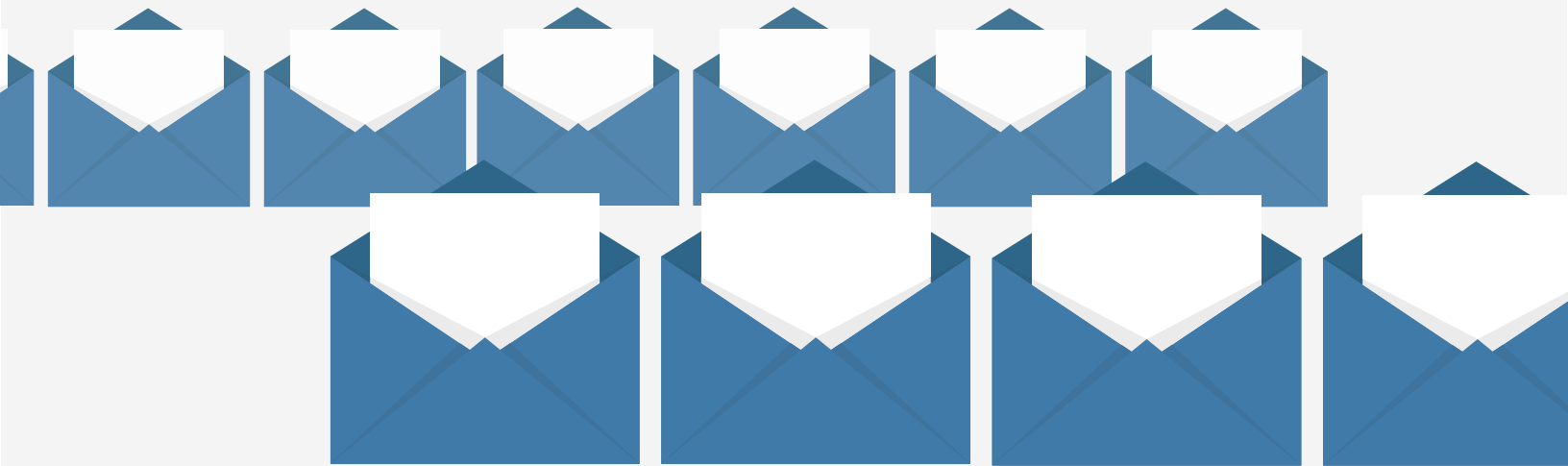
Re-engaging a lost lead with direct mail is a great way to communicate new information and re-establish your businesses as a worthy provider. Should a prospect be ready to move forward, that educational information is a great demonstration of your thought leadership. You may even consider offering a discount, which could peak their interest and push them over the proverbial finish line.

Retaining and Upselling Current Customers

Too often, businesses lose sight of the value of their current customers. [Closing a new customer can cost 5 to 25 times more](#) than it costs to retain an existing customer, depending on your industry. Additionally, [Bain & Company's Frederick Reichheld found](#) that improving customer retention by 5% boost your profits by 25% to 95%.

Rather than newsletters that easily get lost in the mess of your customers' inboxes, direct mail pieces are a great way to show your customers that they're top-of-mind. You can send pieces that provide important news or offer additional services that can help them achieve their ultimate goals.





Building Your Mailing List

One of the most instrumental components of a direct mail campaign is your contact list. It's an element of the process that often holds marketers back from starting a campaign. There are different ways that you can leverage the information you do have, however. The following are some measures you can take to build out your mailing lists.

Create remarkable content

There's no better mechanism for building fruitful contacts lists than to create valuable content offers to your prospects. Guides, infographics, whitepapers and many other pieces of content help you gather contact information. If your landing page requests a physical address, your prospects will be hesitant unless the content is of great value. They must feel that providing their address is worth the knowledge they'll gain.



Collect addresses at events

People are generally more trusting of providing their addresses when they meet you face-to-face. When you've established a personal relationship, you're better suited to ask for this valuable information. That's why asking for contact information at conferences and other events is a smart list-building strategy. Though not always suited to your audience, you may also consider a raffle that asks contestants for the mailing address and other contact information.

Aggregate your current lists

If you have a solid contact list but lack mailing addresses, you can use aggregation services that use your contacts' emails to cross reference other databases and determine their physical addresses. With an engaging direct mail campaign, the return on your efforts could more than cover the cost of an aggregate service.

Purchase a mailing list

Though it shouldn't be your first (or second) option, you may need to turn to purchasing contact information. If you feel confident that the list you're buying is full of relevant prospects, it could be a good option. It's important that you set realistic expectations when sending mailers to a purchased list, however. Organic lists almost always generate higher engagement and response rates. These prospects are already familiar with you, after all.





Integrating Direct Mail and Digital Marketing

One of the most important distinctions of modern direct mail is its connection to the digital world. No matter your objectives, it's imperative that the next action you encourage recipients to take involves going online. Not only will this help you interact with them in the digital space, but it ensures you can track the effectiveness of your campaign.

Direct mail may feel like a completely different endeavor than your other marketing efforts, but it must work together with those tactics all the same. No matter the medium, you need to tell a consistent brand story. Social media and video happen to be two of the most powerful partners of direct mail. Here's how you can leverage them both:



Branching into Social Media

If you focus part of your marketing efforts on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn ads or sponsored posts, consider ways you can combine that work with your automated direct mail. You can use the same contact list for your direct mail campaign and create a customized Facebook audience to show ads with similar messaging. The offline to online “retargeting” will help you develop stronger brand awareness and help drive engagement from mailer recipients who have yet to responded to your direct mail efforts.

Conversely, you can create a workflow for prospects you’re targeting on Facebook, sending them mailers to better capture their attention. If they haven’t taken action on your social ads, you could use similar messaging in a direct mail piece, which has been [shown to better engage prospects.](#)

Integrating direct mail and social media marketing may not be a strategy that works for you and your audience, though. No one tactic or combination of tactics suits all businesses. If such an integrated campaign does suit your prospects and objective, however, you could make the most out of both efforts.



Incorporating Video

One of the best ways to create a more interactive experience is to use direct mail to lead prospects to a video. In fact, if you show them a personalized video – [which you can do at scale](#) – you'll start to create a much stronger connection. Consider some of the most substantial statistics from [The All-Encompassing Guide To Crushing Personalized Video:](#)

- **4x** – The number of customers who would rather watch a video about a product than read about it
- **10x** – The rate of engagement with personalized video compared to any other digital marketing technology
- **1.81x** – The rate at which shoppers are more likely to purchase when they view a video

The type of video to show a prospect depends on their place in their buyer's journey, of course. This information also dictates how long the video should be. Not only can you use video to encourage prospects to browse your website, but you can also offer more educational content or encourage them to schedule a demo. You may even create a video series that discusses different aspects of an overarching topic.

Videos intended for sales-qualified leads should be a conversational piece with the goal of encouraging them to speak with you directly. Mention your prospects' names, companies and especially, their pains. Depending on the information you've learned about each prospect, you could offer them insight into relevant customer testimonials, product tutorials or a discussion about pricing.





Tracking and Optimizing Campaigns

With an entire direct mail campaign planned out, your last step is to track your efforts and determine its effectiveness. Integrating your direct mail and CRM or marketing software allows you create automated triggers, but also track the success of your campaign as a whole. By including personalized codes or links on your mailers, you can track the action and responses that each of your prospects take.

With such insight, you're better equipped to nurture your leads and tweak your current or future direct mail campaigns to optimize its effectiveness. While starting a new tactic may seem intimidating, automated direct mail gives you the power to quickly create a productive campaign.

Finally, you can take advantage of direct mail without the headaches of antiquated marketing.





Ready to push “Start?”

Schedule a demo to learn how your businesses can specifically scale and automate your marketing without losing the personal touch.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

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