

AVOIDING COMMON MAIL ORDER MISTAKES

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AVOIDING COMMON MAIL ORDER MISTAKES

Not everyone has worked in an office atmosphere all of their life. And when this type of person decides to go into a mail order business they don't know the first thing about communicating properly to other dealers and potential customers. This lack of communication can close a new mail order business faster than lightening. Here are some tips to make your transition smoother:

Address Your Envelope Properly

You should use a #10 business-size envelope (not the short ones you use to write to your mother.) The envelope should contain the full name and address of the person you are writing as well as YOUR full name and address in the upper left-hand corner. If the letter is undeliverable because a dealer has closed due to death or illness, you will get the letter back if your return address is in the upper left-hand corner. In addition, if something should happen to the contents inside the envelope the dealer can contact you because of your return address. And try to avoid handwriting your return address. Sometimes these are impossible to read. If you can't afford pre-printed envelopes by all means order some address labels for \$1.25 per 1,000 from Walter Drake (you know the kind that are advertised in your mail box everyday.) Neon or glistening-type return labels are hard to read so try to avoid those too. Plain white ones with black ink will do fine.

Include a Note or Letter

Nothing is more frustrating than to receive an order from a customer with a check or cash enclosed with NO explanation of what the person is ordering. Beginners often forget that the average mail order dealer has 100's or even 1,000's of products and services they offer. Many of those items might be priced the same. An example of a good cover letter would be:

Dear (fill in the name):

I noticed your ad in (name of publication) and would like to order your (name of product you are ordering.) Thank you for your attention to this matter. (Your name and address)

You can write this information on a post-it note and attach to your check, however, it is more professional to use a standard sheet of 8 1/2x11" paper and put your name and address at the top of the sheet. This way, if the envelope is non-readable or your return address is marked up in any way, the dealer can read your name and address and fill your order. In your cover letter you might want to mention that you are new to mail order and would appreciate any information to help you out. Often, dealers extend a helpful hand to help others.

Don't Expect Your Order in 2 Days

Some people will see an advertisement, order an item on Monday and expect to receive it back by Thursday of the same week. This is impossible. Try to rationalize that it takes 3-10 days to receive first-class mail. Then it takes another 3-10 days for most dealers to fill their orders. Not everyone can provide 24-hour service, especially if the mail order business owner is very busy.

Some of us have families, children and personal lives that take up part of our time and we don't spend every waking moment processing orders. Most beginners don't realize that there are some mail order people processing an AVERAGE of 200-1,000 pieces of mail PER DAY. It's hard to imagine. And since most of us don't have employees to help us, we work ourselves to death. We love it though _ but please try and have a little patience and understanding when placing an order. Besides, if you place an order with a national mail order house, don't they tell you to allow 4-6 weeks for your order to arrive? Give small dealers the same courtesy.

Having a mail order business is a lot of fun. It is exciting and you get to meet a lot of great people. However, it is also a business and should be treated as such. If you are really serious and you have never had any office-related exposure, at least take an afternoon to read a book you can get free at the library on starting your small business. It's well worth its weight in gold and you can start making friends and reaping the rewards of getting money in your mailbox on a daily basis.