

FIVE THINGS YOU MUST DO TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN MAIL-ORDER.

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FIVE THINGS YOU MUST DO TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN MAIL-ORDER.

A mail-order business is a great business to start, either part-time or full-time. It's exciting, because it's always changing, and it can be very profitable, if run correctly. One important thing to remember, though, is that mail-order businesses are easy to start, but take work to maintain.

Don't believe the hype you hear about making millions overnight in mail-order. It's happened to a few lucky fools, but that's about it. You have to use your head in mail-order, if you want to survive.

There are five extremely crucial rules to remember when running a mail-order business. You still won't be guaranteed success, but it will be a whole lot easier, if you follow these rules.

1) EXPLORE FREE AND LOW COST MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES.

Too many people jump into a mail-order business with an expensive, flashy full-page ad in a big magazine. That's great IF it's successful, but what do you do when your ad only pulls enough orders to cover its cost, and you have no marketing budget left for new ads? Lick your wounds, and close down your business.

The smart thing to do at the start (and throughout your mail-order career) is to take advantage of all the free and low cost marketing options at your fingertips.

You say you don't know about any? Well, here are some ideas.

Send a sample of your product along with a press release to the products reviewers at the magazines your customers read. Also, write a short article about a subject or issue that will interest your potential customers and that has a connection to the product you sell, and submit it to those same magazines.

For example, if you sell bass fishing lures, write an article on the best times of the day for bass fishing.

Offer to talk about the subject on radio or TV talk shows regarding this subject. Cable TV, in particular, has plenty of talk shows with specific audiences that are desperately in need of guests.

In all of these instances, include a short paragraph with information on how to contact you and a general description of the products or services you sell. Offer your articles or expertise for free, in return for this paragraph either appearing at the end of your article, or being read after the interview.

Marketing yourself as an expert in your business will get you far more publicity than placing an expensive ad, and it's virtually free, except for your time, a few stamps and a few phone calls. It works for me, and I know it can work for you.

2) PYRAMID YOUR PROFITS.

What does this mean? It means that you should take at least half of your profits and reinvest it in more advertising.

When you make your first batch of sales, don't take your profits and throw a party.

It might seem like a good idea now, but you'll regret it later. A good way to grow your sales is by expanding your advertising. If you can only afford one or two small ads in the beginning, that's fine. If those ads are successful, make sure you take the profits from the sales they generate and reinvest them in four or five of the same ads in different magazines. Then, reinvest the profits from those ads into seven or eight ads, and so on.

Don't be concerned about making immediate money. You'll make a larger profit LATER if you reinvest in your business NOW.

3) TRACK YOUR ADS. Suppose you have ten or fifteen different ads running in different publications. All of a sudden, you get a whole load of orders. Of course, you want to continue running the ad that pulled in the orders, in the same publication and in ones you haven't advertised in before. This will bring in more loads of orders, right?

But, when you look at the orders, you have no idea which of your ads was the one that clicked. When you're done crying, resolve that, from now on, you will KEY and TRACK your ads.

Keying and tracking ads is so simple that many people miss it. Here's all you have to do. On each ad, preferably on the address, add a letter or number code that will indicate to you where the order came from.

For example, if you're advertising in the August issue of Popular Mudboggling, and your business name is Joe's Knobby Tires, put your name in the ad as Joe's Knobby Tires-PM8. PM stands for the issue name, the 8 is for August. Then, you can look at the envelope and you'll know instantly where the order came from.

Make a table on a piece of paper with columns for date, item ordered, amount paid, and date the order was shipped. At the top of the page, tape a copy of the ad, and write the ad key next to it. Then, when you receive orders, record the information on the proper page.

4) DO SMALL SCALE TESTS BEFORE LARGE SCALE ADVERTISING.

Before you sink hundreds or thousands of dollars into a large ad or mailing, test the waters. Place a smaller ad with the same message in the magazine for two or three issues, and see if it pulls. Or, if you're renting a mailing list, do a smaller mailing to a small percentage of the list, instead of just rolling the whole thing out.

Testing is important in this business. There are two possibilities that can come out of a test. Either the ad/ mailing works, or it doesn't.

Now, it's up to you to figure out WHY it didn't work. Either the ad/ mailing copy isn't effective, or you're reaching the wrong audience. Review the whole picture, find out what needs to be changed, make the changes, then retest. When you hit on the right combination, THEN take the big plunge.

5) DON'T BE AFRAID TO ADMIT YOUR MISTAKES OR FAILURES.

Let's face it. You won't hit a home run in this business every time your up at bat. In fact, just like in baseball, you may strike out more times than not.

But, the times that you're either lucky, and get to first base on a walk, or you get a hit will make up for your strikeouts.

You need to keep a stiff upper lip, admit that you didn't get a hit, and move on. Mail-order success comes not from overnight millions, but from steady trickles. Put another way, mail-order is really a "get-rich-slow" business. If you keep plugging away, keep learning from mistakes, and keep trying new things as you find them, you'll at least be headed for success road, if not on it from the start.