

SECTION 2 Questions 15–27

Read the text below and answer Questions 15–21.

USING DIRECT MAIL TO SELL YOUR PRODUCT

When you have set up your own business, you must, of course, start selling your goods or services. One way is by using direct mail – in other words, sending a sales letter (or email) directly to companies that might want to do business with you.

One important factor is your mailing list – that is, who you contact. You can build this up from your own market research, existing clients and advertising responses, or you can contact list brokers and rent or buy a compiled list. If you are contacting a business, it is important to address the letter to the decision maker, ideally by name or at least by job title.

While the desirability and price of the product on offer will obviously influence sales, you also need to gain the maximum impact from your sales letter. To achieve that, bear the following points in mind:

- You have no more than two seconds from when the reader starts the letter to convince them to continue. If you fail, they will throw it away. The opening is crucial to attract their attention. And so that they don't lose interest, avoid having too much text.
- Try to send each mailing in a white envelope. It might be cheaper to use a brown envelope but it doesn't make for such good presentation.
- Include a brochure. Depending on the volume and on whether you can afford the cost, try to use at least two-colour printing for this. If practicable, it may be worth enclosing a free sample – this is a much greater incentive than photographs.
- However interested your potential clients are in buying, they will only do so if it can be done easily. So, include an order form (and of course details of how to return it) with your letter.
- When you receive your replies, assess your response rate and monitor the sales. If necessary, the sales letter can then be amended to attract other clients on subsequent mail shots; make sure each different letter is coded so that monitoring is easy and effective.
- Ensure that each reply is dealt with quickly and professionally. If further details are requested, these must be sent out promptly. There is no point in encouraging potential customers to contact you if your service is slow or non-existent.