

WHEN, WHY AND HOW TO USE MAILING LISTS

Mailing lists may be the cause of more heartbreaks than any other single factor in mail order. A poorly chosen list, a weak mailing and the high cost of mailing to a list can tax the optimism of a new dealer very, very quickly. Arm yourself with knowledge before embarking on a course like this!

Whether you should use a mailing list to sell your product depends on several things:

Is it too complex an offering to be explained in a 30 word ad?

Can you afford to mail 200 to 1,000 pieces on the chance that you won't get a single order?

Can you make a profit selling your product to only two to twenty people in a 1,000 piece mailing?

Will a re-order of your product be required, and can you make your re-orders pay for the losses you will likely get from mailing to a list?

Do you know enough to choose the right list for your offering?

It takes either great faith in your offering or great stupidity to mail with a list. Most list companies today, specialize in "opportunity seekers" - people generally quite new to mail order who are either looking for a product to sell or an offer that will get them rich in a hurry.

Most of these "opportunity seekers" are engaged in chain letter type schemes at some point, and they use mailing lists to make gains in their plans. Most of them lose money, but enough people will try it once to make money, and these pie-in-the-sky dreamers are the bread and butter for a lot of mailing list companies. Unless you have a truly superior offering for these opportunity seekers, and you probably don't, they are not worth your time and money. Most of them are unsophisticated dabblers.

Multi-level lists, offered by many companies, are truly an interesting way to test response to an MLM offer. Many MLM

people like to write back - in their own handwriting - about their successes and failures, and they will always respond to a superior product.

Specialized product-buyers' lists can pull beautifully if the offering is unique enough, and worth a try for merchandise marketing.

Regardless of what kind of mailing list you use, be very careful in choosing a good list. Many are sold and resold to people making the very same offering, which is a waste of everyone's money. "Free" mailing lists are usually as good as their price indicates. Check the guarantees. Common sense will tell you which are good for you and which are good for the company selling the lists. And check to see how the lists are compiled. Are they people who have already bought something by mail, or are they merely people who indicated they might want to buy something by mail?

In conclusion, we recommend that you never start any campaign with a mailing list when advertising is so much cheaper. While it may prove to be more profitable than advertising, keep this rule in mind:

When you're ready to try a mailing list, be fully prepared to lose every penny you spend in buying and mailing that list, because it could happen.