

Direct Marketing Tip Sheet

50 Tips for More Effective & Efficient Campaigns



Introduction

Since Ballantine is a direct marketing production company and we provide a wide variety of services, we have access to a large pool of highly-skilled vendors that we trust on a daily basis with our client's projects.

We've recently reached out to some of them asking for tips. We also contributed internally. The end result is this white paper tip sheet containing actionable advice from a wide variety of vendors with different capabilities and experience. Categories covered include creative, PURLs, email, mailing, envelopes and printing.

We hope you learn a few things you can act on immediately and achieve positive results. If you have any questions about what you read below, please send me an email: ryan@ballantine.com

Regards,

*Ryan Coté, Director of Marketing
The Ballantine Corporation*

Creative Tips

1. Customers prefer the look of foil over paper by 16%.
Increase your response rates by using silver or hologram labels.
2. Choice depresses response. People are already faced with the choice to respond to a direct mail piece or not, so to give them a choice of offer, a choice of premium or any other thing that makes them stop and think, they are that much more likely to set the piece aside to deal with it later and never get back to it. You have 15 seconds as they are poised with their mail over the trash can to make an impression, so if they take the time to actually read your piece, you want them to immediately say "YES!", not "I wonder which would be better?". That being said, the one place where choice does help close a deal is to give the recipient a choice of how to respond — via mail, phone, online, or even fax. Make it convenient for them to say YES and your response rate will improve!





**“White space
is your friend!**

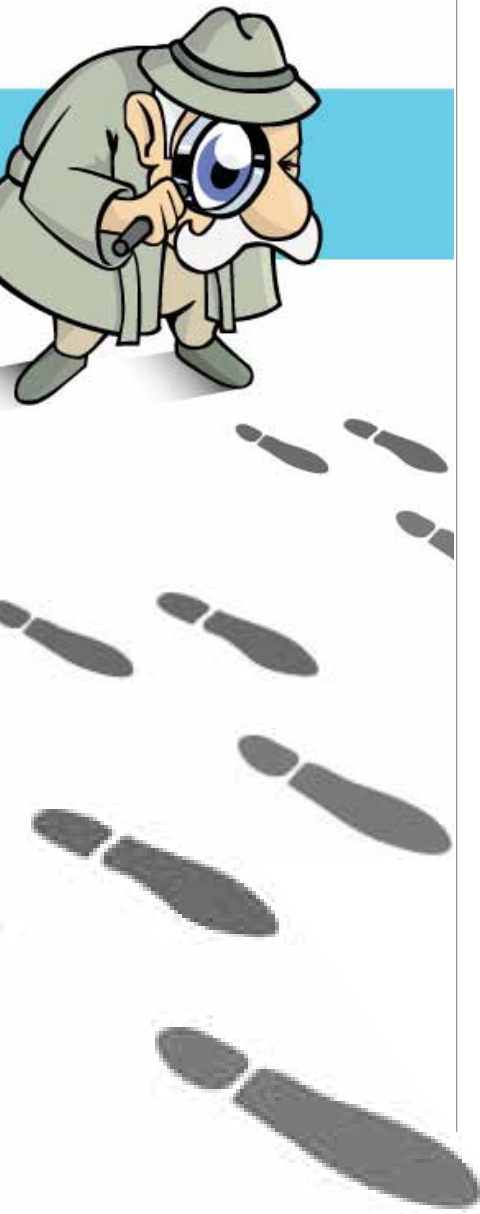
**LESS visual
noise =
MORE visual
power.”**



3. Many clients come to us with existing corporate identity that is limited to one or two pantone colors contained in their logo. When designing 4/color work for these clients, it is helpful to “extend” the palette. Using their existing chips as the core for the primary palette, arrange additional chips which extend this primary palette to 4 - 6 colors. These should match the core colors in balance and intensity. Lastly, find swatches that compliment one another and envision this palette working within your design.
4. Some of the most attractive designs are built around a great photo or illustration. When selecting imagery, good designers will always read the copy. Images should support the copy and visually communicate the concept. Gratuitous imagery, while adding visual interest to a design, will usually “muddy” the communication if not tied in some way to the copy. The one exception to this would be the use of backgrounds to add depth and texture overall. Lastly, try to find different and interesting ways to crop photos/illustrations in a layout, i.e. get out of the “box”.
5. White space is your friend! Yes, it’s true... When your audience’s attention needs to be captured within seconds, there’s nothing like a message or image that’s crystal clear and easy to read. Try expanding a piece to multi-page rather than cramming everything into your design. Less visual noise = more visual power.
6. Create your own brand guidelines. Consistency and frequency is key to successful design and marketing. Start with a general set of rules that define even just the basics: color palette, font style and size and the type of imagery used. When used consistently over the long haul it becomes an extremely important and effective tool.
7. Be inspired. When you see something that is visually appealing – clip it, bookmark it, file it and remember it. Realize what made you stop when you first saw it...did it make you smile? Did it get you thinking? Don’t be afraid to use your emotions in your design tactics to create your own inspiring piece.

Personal URL Tips

8. Based on our experience, PURLs work best for lead generation, not for directly selling something. We encourage you to test, however, because you might get different results based on your product or service.
9. Instead of using an existing domain for a PURL, register a brand new one. This enables you to get very creative and brand your campaign. Simply use Go Daddy’s bulk registration tool to type whatever domain ideas come to mind and then see which ones are available.



10. Make sure you optimize the response form on your PURL landing page. Only ask the questions that are 100% necessary. If there's information you can get from them after they respond, then don't include these questions on the form. The path from visiting the landing page to clicking the "submit" button should be as easy as possible.
11. Your PURL landing page should be very relevant with swapping out copy and images. If your PURL vendor can do it, customize the thank you page and thank you email as well. Doing so keeps the relevancy momentum going from start to finish which makes the campaign more effective.
12. Regarding your PURL landing page, aim for relevant, clean and simple. And don't include distractions like external links unless you absolutely have to, and if you do, make them open up in a new window.
13. A PURL gives you valuable data: who visited the PURL and responded, who visited and didn't respond and who didn't visit at all. Make sure you're using this information to the fullest by personalizing your follow up to these different segments.

Email Tips

14. Two critical elements influencing email deliverability can be summarized by sender reputation and content relevance. An email sender's reputation is developed over time by sending consistently to well-managed distribution lists. This is then further influenced by producing content that is highly targeted and relevant to your audience.
15. If your email marketing vendor supports Google Analytics tracking, convert your web links so you can track all the different pages of your website that a customer or prospects visits after they click thru from the email.
16. Before launching an email blast, make sure you test how it will look in different email browsers such as Outlook, Gmail, Yahoo, etc.
17. Consider testing this tactic: a week or two after you send an email blast download the non-openers and send them a second email with a different subject line. Make sure, however, that you suppress the openers.
18. When writing an email blast, put a call-to-action button at both the top AND bottom of a piece, and make some of the text clickable throughout the body copy. That way whenever the recipient decides to click through and take the offer, they won't have to scroll up or down to find a "submit" button. Make it ultra-easy to respond at any time throughout the email.

19. If your headline in an HTML email is a graphic and contains the offer, make sure you re-state the offer as the first line of text in the body copy. Some browsers strip out graphics in an HTML email, and if your offer is in the headline that gets stripped out because it's part of the graphics, then the recipient will not immediately know what the offer is. They shouldn't be expected to read the whole email before the offer is repeated again in the footer. In general, you should design HTML emails with more copy than images because many email browsers nowadays are automatically blocking images.
20. If you are B2B, keep in mind when creating email campaigns that many professionals use the preview pane. As a result, try to put your offer at the top of the email. You should also keep your subject line to 50 characters or less.
21. If you have the data to do so, consider segmenting your email file into the 4 time zones. This will enable you to accurately test and find out exactly what blast time produces the best results.

Mailing Tips

22. Always design a folded self mailer so the finished fold is on the bottom. This allows one wafer on top rather than 2 on the bottom saving the customer money.
23. When mailing a concentrated flat mailing do not fold to a letter size. By folding it down you are not only required to wafer the piece, you are also unable to attain a DDU postage rate because it is no longer available for letters.
24. Do you ever send out a direct mail campaign with multiple copy tests or versions printing in black (i.e., price tests, sales reps' names, etc.)? These are often time and budget nightmares. When possible, it's cost-effective to print the shells (form or letter) and then ink-jet the copy that varies onto the shell at the same time you're ink-jetting the address block.
25. Consider co-mingling. Co-mingling means sorting your mail with another company's mail of similar size to achieve the BMC/SCF discounts you wouldn't qualify for with your mailing alone. With postage generally being half the cost of the job, these savings add up. Consider doing this if you are mailing a project that is nationwide and would normally not go to the BMC/SCF level due to a lack of concentration (meaning a mailing that is spread out thin across the United States).



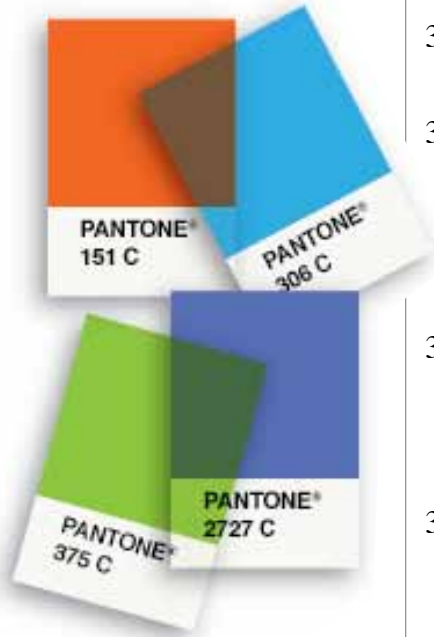
**Using a
window
envelope?
Do the
tap test.**



26. Make sure the aspect ratio of your direct mail piece is greater than 1.3 but less than 2.5. This will get you a better postage rate. To determine the aspect ratio simply divide the length by the width. For example, a 6x9 postcard has an aspect ratio of 1.5 which is good (9 divided by 6). This is why square mailers are good and bad. Good because the size is unique and it will stand out in your prospect's mailbox, but bad because the postage costs will be higher than normal (aspect ratio is 1).
27. Make sure you confirm that your direct mail's address block uses a minimum font size of 8pt of any readable font. If it doesn't, you might incur extra costs from the USPS.
28. If you mail a letter package with a window envelope, make sure you do the tap test. What you do is take your letter package and tap the bottom side against a flat surface. According to USPS regulations, a minimum of .125" space around the entire address area must be maintained.
29. If you send out self-mailers or booklets, make sure you consult with your vendor on the proper amount and positioning of the tabbing that keeps the piece closed. It may seem like a minor issue, but you could get hit with big postal penalties if you don't do it right.
30. Are you sending out letter packages? If so, make sure the components are sized so that it leaves at least a 1/4" on both the left and right side when inserted into the envelope and a 1/8" minimum throat. The throat is the opening height of the envelope. These measurements are required for efficient and cost-effective machine inserting of the components into the envelopes.

Envelope Tips

31. If you are looking for an attractive but inexpensive envelope check out flexo printing and a web-style envelope. Flexo printing has come a long way from when it was called a rubber stamp. You can also produce half tones and solid coverage.
32. By letting the printer/converter have the appropriate amount of time to manufacture an order and allowing them to find the most efficient raw materials for your custom order is the best way to get aggressive pricing. The materials in the envelope process (paper, patch, cartons) represent on average 35% of the envelope cost. The cost can rise 10%-20% if forced to purchase inefficient materials.



33. If you are trying to create a 4 color envelope but have the budget for only 2 color, running 2 PMS colors on a jet press using a mix of screens and solids will provide a more diverse look than just two solid colors.
34. When running three PMS colors, it may be cost efficient to actually run 4CP as many printers discount the set up time running process vs. PMS colors.
35. Envelope converters will experience 1/16” variance in either direction when die cutting envelopes. Designers need to take that into account especially when their design involves colors that they do not want to bleed. Realizing the variance, a designer may choose to avoid designs where color stops at the fold of an envelope.
36. Many envelope converters have switched their traditional window high dies (metal die) to magnetic or flexible die systems. The flex dies are much less expensive making it easier than ever to create unique pistol, double and odd shaped windows designed to help get your envelope opened.
37. The “brown paper bag” envelope is a completely automatically insertable envelope that is manufactured on International Paper 24# Sand Kraft to give the appearance of a brown paper bag. This makes the inference “we’ve cut all corners to give you this special offer” very believable.

Printing Tips

38. Utilize the latest in varnish and coatings that are available to add special effects. Strike through dull varnish with overall gloss coating creates the effect of offline spot dull and gloss varnish without the additional cost of extra passes on press. It also eliminates the need to “dust” the sheets after printing to reduce the feel of spray powder build up. “Soft Touch” coating can also be done in-line to create the velvet feel of a more expensive paper.
39. When printing on uncoated papers, replace standard 4cp inks with special “kaleidoscope” 4cp to brighten up colors and extend the color gamut range of traditional 4cp inks and minimize the flattening of colors when ink soaks into the paper.
40. Be flexible when it comes to size. Purchasing agents are often given the task of meeting client’s budgets while maintaining the integrity of a designer’s specifications. Often time tests are designed for the short run sheet-fed market. Postcards are a classic example: 6”x9” is a great fit for a 20” x 26” or 28” x 40” sheet sizes with plenty of room for bleeds and color bars. However, when the rollout comes and the quantity is large enough for the web market, the size is a bad fit.



Add smell and touch to your printed pieces... use specialty coatings for enhanced visual impact!

41. In years past the standard for commodity grade offset was 88 bright while opaque papers were typically 92 bright. Today, commodity grade offsets are 92 bright while opaque papers are typically 96 bright. Selecting a commodity grade offset over an opaque for a light to medium coverage project can save as much as 15% on the cost to print. Naturally, some projects with heavy ink coverage will still require opaque for its ability to conceal show-through. However, working with designers early on may help to avoid the need for opaque paper by limiting ink saturation on both the front and back of your project.
42. Try testing 3 different creatives by running them as an A/B/C split, one running over the other. When inserted, every other piece will be different. This is a good way to find out what graphics or offers will pull a better ROI. Three into the cutoff, three different graphics delivered and mixed every impression.
43. For quality issues with folding and cracking of self mailers always try to plan jobs using “grain correct” layouts. At times this is not possible with stock sheets so we will have stock converted to a short grain size to accommodate. A good question the marketing executive/print buyer can ask their printer is if the job is “grain correct”.
44. Many of today’s jobs are run on silks/velvets/dulls where printability is awesome and it’s being used more and more but the downfall is it’s susceptible to easily marking in handling/bindery/mailing. The solution is to add driers to inks/seal with coating/varnish.
45. Generally speaking, most continuous form half web paper comes in stocking sizes of 18” and 23” wide. If the project demands a quick turn time, estimating will use a standard size stock. As a result, an end user will get more value if the form is designed keeping these sizes in mind.
46. If a continuous form has large areas of solid print or heavy copy, running it on a UV press will minimize any potential offsetting issues.
47. Add smell and touch to the visual impact of your printed pieces through the use of specialty coatings. How would you like to have an image of a cherry smell like a cherry, an image of cement feel like cement, a sandy beach feel like sand or a piece of fabric feel silky smooth. These are just some of the available coating options that can be applied overall or by utilizing a Cyrel plate for spot applications.

48. When producing a large quantity on 100# gloss cover, consider changing to 9 pt gloss cover because 9pt can be produced on a web press, but most 100# gloss cover cannot.
49. Avoid final sizes that are a perfect square because they are usually a bad fit on press. You will waste paper.
50. To get the best overall print price find out from your printer the grade and type of papers they stock. This will also allow for more schedule flexibility.

Disclaimer: This tip sheet was created in August of 2009. Please make sure you check with your vendor before implementing our suggestions to confirm the advice is still accurate.



**Your Full-Service Partner
for Direct Marketing
Creative and Production**

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About The Ballantine Corporation

The Ballantine Corporation is a New Jersey-based company offering turnkey direct marketing creative and production services to companies nationwide. Family-owned since 1966.

For more information on how Ballantine can jump start your direct marketing campaigns, please contact Ryan Coté at ryan@ballantine.com or (973) 305-1500 x206. You can also visit Ballantine online at www.ballantine.com.