

The Direct Response Offer Guide & Checklist

The all-important direct response marketing offer – the thing that gets John and Mary’s attention and makes them respond to your content or advertisement, either to buy, get something special , or more information. We’re not just talking direct mail here, we’re talking all channels and media where you place content that you hope engages a prospective customer. And, the rules of offer development and execution apply in both business-to-business and business-to-consumer marketing. They also apply whether or not you advertisement / content is soft sell or hard sell, or story-telling experiential engagement relationship development oriented. Your goal, as a marketer is to get them to act (respond), and hopefully eventually buy and to do that you need to make them an offer they can’t refuse.

In the world of direct marketing advertising and content development, the “Direct Marketing Offer” is the second most important aspect of developing a direct marketing campaign. After identifying and targeting the right audience, it is 2.5 times as important as the least important factor. It is the whole proposition and incentives that you offer for response.

What is an 'Offer'?

It's more than your product or service. It's your total proposition to the prospect or customer. Besides product, the components of an offer might include a free gift, introductory or discount pricing, low finance rates, free shipping, to name just a few. Offers have a major impact and they can positively or negatively impact your programs response.

The more generous your offer, the greater the response will be. If you're after really large response, then make a really generous offer. If your goal is to attract qualified leads from very interested prospects then a lesser offer will be more effective.

Make sure your offer is relevant to both your target audience and the product you are selling. If you mismatch the offer to the audience, it won't be attractive and you can discourage interest on the part of potential buyers.

Before working up your offer, check to see what your competitors are doing.

If you can make an offer without reducing the price of your product, this is the best path to follow because customers acquired at reduce margins or special pricing generally

continue to respond only to these kinds of offers and are very hard to convert to full pricing offers.

Why is the 'Offer' so important?

The offer is so important, because the right offer can sell almost anything. The offer is one of the simplest and most dramatic ways to improve direct marketing results. All other things being equal, it is the most crucial of the three parts of response creativity. It is important to think of your market as you are structuring your offer. What's their sex, age, educational level, special interests, and social-economic status? How you state the offer counts. It both selects and involves the prospects. The offer determines the quality of the customers who respond.

It's an important aspect of direct response creativity to find new ways of stating an existing offer. And, it is important to find new offers.

What makes up an 'Offer'?

The following factors make up the total offer.

- The products/services
- The price of the product/services
- The payment terms
- The way the offer is worded or pictured
- Any incentives, bonuses, extras, premiums
- Any time limitations or restrictions
- Any free literature or booklets
- Any special fulfillment options – e.g., free shipping

What types of 'Offers' are there?

Over the years, various marketers have developed a wide variety of offers to entice buyers to respond and/or buy. Depending on whom you talk to that list is probably in the realm of 75 to 100 or more different offers. These offers fall into various categories and the

table below gives you a good overview of the offers you might consider using depending on your audience, what you are promoting and how you want the person engaged to act.

General Category	Examples
Basic Offers	Right price Free trial Money-back guarantee Cash with order C.O.D. Bill me later Installment terms Free gift for an inquiry Free gift offers Free gift for buying Multiple free gifts with a single order Your choice of free gifts Free gifts based on size of order Two-step gift order Continuing incentive gifts Free gift for a trial order Mystery gift offer
Discount offers	Cash discount Short-term introductory offer Refund certificate Introductory order discount Trade discount Early bird discount Quantity discount Sliding scale discount Selected discounts
Sales offers	Seasonal sales Reason-why sales Price increase notice Auction-by-mail
Sample offers	Free sample Nominal charge samples

General Category	Examples
	Sample offer with tentative commitment Quantity sample offer Free sample lesson
Time limit offers	Limited time offers Enrollment periods Pre-publication offer Charter membership or subscription offer Limited edition offer
Guarantee offers	Extended guarantee Money-back guarantee Double-your-money-back Guaranteed buy-back agreement Guaranteed acceptance offer
Build up the sale offers	Multi-product offers Piggyback offers The deluxe offer Good-better-best offer Add-on offer Write-your-own-ticket offer Bounce-back offer Increase and extension offer
Sweepstakes offers	Drawing type sweepstakes Lucky number sweepstakes "Everyone Wins" sweepstakes Involvement sweepstakes Talent contest
Club and continuity offers	Positive option Negative option Automatic shipments Continuity load-up offer Front-end load-ups Open-ended commitment "No strings attached" commitment Lifetime membership fee

General Category	Examples
	Annual membership fee
Specialized offers	The philanthropic privilege Blank check offer Executive preview charge Yes/no offers Self-qualification offer Exclusive rights for your trading area The super dramatic offers Trade-in offer Third party referral offer Member-get-a-member offer Name-getter offers Purchase-with-purchase Delayed billing offer Reduced down payment Stripped-down products Secret bonus gift Rush shipping service The competitive offer The nominal reimbursement offer Established-the-value offer