

## 11 Pointers and Pitfalls That Can Make...Or Break... The Effectiveness of Personalized Direct Mail Messages

by Automatic-Mail.com

When it comes to direct mail personalization, it's easy to come up having egg on your face... embarrassing yourself and your company... and bringing about a response that is entirely opposite the one you were hoping for.

Here are 11 pointers that will help you navigate the world of direct mail personalization so there are no eggs — hardboiled, fried, scrambled or otherwise — to get in the way of your direct mail success.

1. Accuracy is probably the single most critical element when it comes to personalization. There is nothing more unbelievable than mail that arrives personalized incorrectly... and receiving such mail is an immediate turn off for many readers. Consequently, do everything in your power to get your information right.

When you're not sure about a name or spelling... or any variable data... it's best to use personalization in moderation... or not at all. When you make a mistake once, maybe it's only a typo, and you can be forgiven. But when you make the same mistake a dozen times in the same correspondence, your error is blatant.

2. Start with good data... and good information. Check and double-check your facts, verifying spelling and accuracy of names, and every piece of variable information you'll be including in your direct mail piece.
3. Personalization is more than a name. When people think about personalization, they usually always think about names. Personalization can include any information that could be helpful to your marketing activity. Obvious fields could be birthdays, name of spouse, nickname, hobbies, vehicle make and model, lease termination date, education level, memberships in organizations, and so on.
4. Continually add to the good data you already have. Every time you come in contact with a client, use this opportunity to learn more — and add what you learn to your database. You'll be able to use this in future mailings.
5. Don't overuse personalization with prospects. When you use too much personalization too soon, you're apt to scare prospects. It stands to reason that you would know more about clients and customers. But when prospects get letters from you that include personal information they might not want you to know or that they believe is private — like their credit rating or the balance on their mortgage — they often feel invaded.

6. Use personalization alternatives. If you're not sure about the variable data you have, try personalizing your message in ways that do not rely so heavily on using the prospect's name: "Someone on Oak Tree Lane will be a winner," or, "An Omaha homeowner will win the grand prize." This "generalized personalization" helps take the guesswork out of direct mail personalization... and can save you money.
7. Use personalization in a natural way. Don't overuse personalize in such a way that is seems every paragraph has a personalized message... or uses the recipient's name. It's a turn off and makes people think you're scamming them.
8. Watch out for capitalization in personalized data. It's a sure sign that what you're sending really isn't "personal." Convert your data to upper/lower case. Examine it one record at a time, if necessary. Other wise you might get Ibm instead of IBM. Or Mcduffy instead of McDuffy.
9. Watch out for abbreviations in personalized data fields. It's a sure sign that your personalization isn't really personalized — that's it's a mechanical function. In the real world... and in a truly personal communication situation... you'd probably write out the word "Suite." When it appears in the address as "Ste," it's a sure give-away that it's really not personalized.
10. Once you start using personalization, you'll discover that it is a powerful tool and that you'll want to get better at it. The key is to determine ahead of time all the fields you'll really need in your database. Use a database structure that allows for substantial growth potential.

## About Automatic Mail Service, Inc.

### Your 360° Direct Marketing Success

We drive sales! Since 1971, Automatic Mail has served its customers with A+ service:

- Ensuring your success
- Freeing you to focus on your business
- Making your marketing efforts more effective and your direct dollars go further

Automatic Automated Marketing integrates your direct print marketing and lead generation with your Website, email marketing, and a master customer data management system. Increases response, ROI, your bottom line.

Keeping up with your clients' needs is overwhelming. Managing your sales pipeline is a challenge.

Automatic Automated Marketing delivers sophisticated, easy-to-use marketing integration tools.

- Improve ROI of direct mail
- Track who is doing what with your print mail, emails, Website.
- Accurately target print, broadcast, online messages.
- Nurture leads and deliver the information they want.
- Cross-sell & up-sell more effectively.
- Manage your clients and your prospects easily, successfully.

Automatic Automated Marketing delivers sales ready leads plus the tools to manage them throughout the entire customer lifecycle.

### Feedback

If you have any feedback or any questions, please email or call Automatic. No matter is too small.

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