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"What You Don't Know About Postcard Marketing Could Cost You Time, Money and Clients"

By Adam Suson, Founder, BBT4, Inc.

Today's salon and spa industry looks very different from the past. The volume of new shops opening has created tons of competition for the consumers' beauty dollar. More full service businesses are popping up in record numbers. The fact that very few salons are prepared for this is shown in the number of salon closings every year. The salon owner or booth renter is faced with this absolute: **You've got to keep your name in front of potential clients!**

So, you've started looking into ways of growing your clientele. What you may not know is that you have a variety of types of marketing to choose from, including TV, radio, newspaper advertising, magazine advertising, direct response marketing, otherwise known as direct mail, and many more. Which ones are best for your business? There are too many variables to discuss at length here, but to simplify things, the best way to really know is to estimate what you believe will be your return on investment, or ROI. That is, the single, annual or lifetime value of a client in relation to the money you spent to get that client. I think we can safely dismiss the television and radio advertising for a simple reason. These are for the most part, "branding mediums". They are best used to set apart a company from the competition, and are primarily used when a company already has a sizeable client base, but want to keep their name in front of a public that knows who they are, what they do, and may, at some time want or need that company's services. You can expect a very low ROI due to the fact that you can't control who is listening and/or watching when you need them to! And, in order to work, it takes deep pockets to sustain either TV or radio. I'm not saying that these options aren't valid for the right company. It's just that unless

you have a strong client base and consumer brand recognition ahead of time, these methods return very little, for a lot of money. The same is true with magazine and newspaper advertising. Without great brand recognition, you really can't expect someone to read your ad and remember you. These methods require the right person, reading the right ad, at the right time. From my own experience, all of the options above will bring you more calls from other advertisers than potential customers, since a company that already advertises is more likely to buy other advertising! This leads us to direct mail.

Direct mail has some real advantages over the other marketing methods we've discussed. Outside of one-on-one, personal self promotion, only direct mail allows you to get the sole attention of the right person when their mind is willing to look at your piece. Their attention is on what your salon has to offer, and when properly done, the mail piece mail can have lasting value since we usually keep the cards we find appealing and/or of value. However, what you may not know is that there are a number of rules that most people, including postcard printing companies, fail to follow. The results are most often a poor return on the time and money spent, which leads you to give up on it before it has a chance to work for you. So here we go...

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW (OR MAY NOT KNOW) ABOUT POSTCARD MARKETING IS:

It takes time and effort to do it right! You'll need to know a bunch of things about customer types, writing skills, coupon offers, graphic design, printing requirements, postal requirements and mailing lists. And that doesn't take in to account the work it takes to address and stamp the darn things. Maybe you've tried some form of mailing to your existing clients or potential customers. Did your efforts and money spent produce the results you expected? If the answer is no, you most likely won't be doing it again any time soon.

The myth: A single mass mailing will bring in customers. Most of the time, we are so busy with so many different things, that we only take a quick look at the mail that is in front of us. Unless we do everything right, at the perfect time, the average return on a one time mailing is likely less than .1%! That means, if you mailed 5,000 pieces, the best return you should expect is about 5 calls. That's a ballpark cost with printing, list and postage of \$2200.00 total. So divide your total cost by the number of people who called you, and what you have is \$440.00 per call! I know a company that created and mailed 7,500 pieces one time and received one call. That one call was a previously contacted business, just calling to see how things were going. From that poor mailing response, I'd say not so good!

A postcard stands out when we are flipping through our mail. Unlike a sealed envelope, a postcard always receives at least a quick look. And by getting that look again and again, the marketer is able to start shaping the readers' opinion about what that company is offering, even if that reader never buys from them, the opportunity for referral is greater. What I mean by that is that your card might be passed along to someone else in the family, or maybe even a friend or coworker.

A highly targeted list, not just a list, is required. Your list is probably the single most important part of any direct mail campaign. If you don't have the right list, you're not getting to the right people. Who are the right people? Well, let's say you happen to be a hair stylist, working in an upscale salon, in your city's hot new area. Your average ticket is \$55.00 for a cut, and you primarily cater to business women who live in the area. And if you think about it, they most likely fit in to an age range of 30 – 59, and earn well over forty thousand dollars per year. But, because of the diversity of that part of town, there is a mix of social class, age and income. If you buy a list of everyone in that zip code, which is typical, you'll be mailing cards to men, seniors, twenty-somethings, and so on.

Get the picture? This is called demographic selection. By knowing your target demographic, you will know with confidence that you are reaching the right type of customers. We've got the audience part figured out. So what's next?

It takes a great offer. I know I said the list is probably the single most important part of any direct mail campaign. But this one is a very close second. Without a killer offer, you miss the opportunity to create a "call to action", and the ability to keep track of the success of your mailing. When someone calls, you should always ask how they heard about your business. Take a look at the following scenario. If you received two cards in the mail the same week, or even the same day from two different oil change shops, and one is merely a "hey, we're here", and the other one offers "hey, we're here, and because we know you'll love our work, take 50% off your next service", which one do you keep? When creating an offer, ask yourself, "What is the lifetime value of a client?" Even a client using your services for a year, probably spends over six hundred dollars during that year. This easily justifies an offer of 50% off or a free cut and style with paid color. In addition, you'll want to add an expiration date, a reason to "act now". By adding an expiration date to your piece, the reader, when caught at the right time, will want to take advantage before it's too late!

It's got to have impact. We're talking the emotion, look, feel, shape and size of the piece. The first big mistake people make when creating their own piece is they don't think about who the piece is being created for. Remember your demographic lesson above? What makes a twenty year old call you does not make a fifty year old call. The writing and the look of the piece must be created for the particular type of people you're trying to attract. Most of the time, the person or company making up the mailer chooses to tell the reader about their particular business and/or services, add pictures of themselves or pictures of their business. This is common, since we want people to see the way we look and the look and feel of our salon or spa. However, most potential clients don't care about you and your salon as much as they care about what you and your

salon can do for them! So, telling a woman about your super magic curl enhancer means nothing to them. However, telling that same woman how your super magic curl enhancer will make men fall at her feet and beg for her love, now that's what we're talking about! Ask yourself, "Of all the mail I receive, what stands out?" Think about things like the size of the piece, how color and images were used, and did the message get a good response from you when you read it? Look to see if the offer was so good, you couldn't pass it up.

They need to see it another time. "What? Now I need to do it again?" You're darn right! And again and again! Marketing research has shown that it takes many contacts with a prospective customer to make your message stick. The consumer may not need your services right away, but by sending multiple cards spread over time, chances are you'll get an offer in their hands at the right time. The regular tap on the shoulder will remind your prospects that your business is worth checking out. In addition, multiple mailings give you the opportunity to test different coupon offers since different people respond to different offers. Some like dollar off coupons, while others like percentage discounts, buy one get one free, or maybe bring a friend for half off each.

A postcard is not always a postcard. Now let's take a look at some options. You could do it yourself by purchasing direct mail marketing books and software to create your masterpiece. This is a terrific option if you have the writing and graphic design skills, they time, marketing expertise, and the willingness to do it again and again. You may choose to go online and seek out a postcard company, but be aware; just because you see an enticing price on the home page doesn't mean that's your only cost. Extra costs include freight, graphic design services, creative writing, the authorized use of pictures or images, special effects and more. Make sure the key rules listed above are followed.

Professional marketing agencies don't always bring better results. If you choose to use an agency, artist or professional copy writer for custom created

marketing, you'll want to make sure you've got lots of time and money to spend. Also, be sure to interview multiple companies to be sure they have experience in direct mail and understand your goals. As a twenty five year veteran in the printing and mailing business, it seems to me that some agencies are focused on their own design goals, awards and recognition, not client success and satisfaction. Even big companies have had their marketing efforts bomb but win agency design awards.

Should you choose to create your own postcard marketing, I hope this report helps. Good luck.

About BBT4Salons

The founder of BBT4Salons was a small business owner. He needed to grow his business and had no idea how to do it consistently and effectively. Though, there are many methods available, he questioned which ones were best for his type of business. He knew that any money or effort he spent had to produce results. He felt overwhelmed with the thought of all that had to be done or learned to market his business, so it usually never got done. After speaking with hundreds of other small business owners, he discovered he was not alone. He came up with a solution to address these same concerns around marketing and customer growth, one that is painless, quick, easy and affordable and more importantly, would actually get used and produce results.

BBT4Salons offers a large selection of highly targeted direct mail marketing campaigns for salon and spa businesses to choose from. Each campaign is a series of jumbo, beautifully designed and written photographic quality cards. A series consists of 6 cards, created to elicit an emotional response in your readers. The order process takes just a few minutes and the results last for months. We print, address and mail the first card in the series to all your potential clients within 72 hours. The next card in the series will be sent to those same potential clients, each subsequent month, for the following five months. We provide the mailing list, consultation and setup and order processing free of charge. BBT4Salons has truly created a quick, easy and affordable way to grow your clientele. With BBT4Salons, you have a marketing system that reaches your potential clients month after month to produce results. And all you have to do is call and we'll take care of everything! Reach us at www.bbt4salons.com or 1-888-8-Use-BBT.