

THE PROFESSIONAL ILLUSIONIST MASTER COURSE



LESSON 15 – DOWNLOAD

DIRECT MARKETING

Whether you are looking for an agent to represent you or trying to sell yourself to direct clients, you need to be able to sell yourself to them; specifically writing effective sales or pitch letters/ emails to effectively capture the attention and interest of your prospects.

This marketing tactic is known as direct marketing. As the name implies, it is a form of marketing where you communicate straight with your client, customer or consumer. It is an aggressive marketing tactic that requires you to hunt for leads and clients. Among its practitioners, it is also referred to as Direct Response Advertising.

It is an important part of the marketing mix for an entertainer and most would likely have done some form of direct marketing to try to book shows. Direct marketing is also a marketing tool that can be very low cost, especially when you have a targeted database.

Characteristics of direct marketing are:

- A targeted database of potential clients or prospects along with their contact info
- Targeted marketing messages that are addressed directly to the potential clients or prospects

Direct marketing seeks to drive a specific “call to action.” For example, a call to action is for them to request for more info, watch a video or click on a link to a website.

TYPES OF DIRECT MARKETING

Cold Calling

Cold calling or telemarketing means calling a prospect ‘cold’ and selling your services to him/ her over the telephone. I advise against using cold calling as a tool to market your illusion show. Consumers are tired of telemarketers and are very resistant to it. As an entertainer selling entertainment, your product is not essential to their business but is viewed as a luxury item. Interrupting their business schedule with an unsolicited phone call is just not effective for an entertainer.

Cold Writing

Cold writing with letters and e-mails are essentially the same except for the medium. In both cases, you are using a written letter, brochure or mailer to market to the prospect. This is a more indirect form of marketing and some find the results minimal due to the proliferation of junk mail and Spam e-mails.

The writing style and content of the cold letters/ e-mails have to be good if your direct marketing is to even stand a chance. Writing styles are a personal choice and some styles sell better in different markets depending on that market's marketing culture and attitude of customers towards marketing.

Aggressive 'guerilla-style' marketing seems to be favoured in the US but does not work as well in some cultures such as in Asia. I personally find a hardcore 'guerilla marketing sales letter' too pushy and pretentious. The letters tend to be overly personal and sound too good to be true. I also find that these type of letters cheapens the image of a product/ service. This is purely a personal opinion and probably has got to do with the Asian culture of being more conservative with a stronger sense of personal space.

Pick up a book on sales letters/ direct marketing and find one that suits your personal selling style and market. Several magicians have also published marketing courses with sample sales letters that have proven successful for them. You can also perform an Internet search for sample sales letters that you can modify for your use.

Combination Direct Marketing

I favour an approach of a combination of cold calling and cold writing. This involves cold sending an e-mail or letter followed by giving the prospect a telephone call a week later. This gives you a better reason to call on the prospect and is less intrusive. If the prospect received your mailer and read it, they will also have an idea of whom you are.

Over the years, we developed another approach to direct marketing. It is a bit of a con, but no one gets hurt and we save time and money. What we do is to cold call a prospect and specifically ask them if they received our promotional mailer (which we never sent out). Obviously, they will reply with a negative response, in which case, we seek permission to send it to them again as well as to send them an e-mail. If they have no interest, they will highlight this and we do not waste sending out a mailer/ e-mail. If they are interested, we let them know that we will be sending out 'another' set of materials and request they look out for it. We then follow up with them with a telephone call a few days later and take it from there.

While some may feel that this approach is a tad deceitful, it does get the job done effectively and productively.

FOUR STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL DIRECT MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Here are four steps for a successful simple direct marketing campaign for entertainers:

Step 1 – Build a Prospect Database

The first step in mounting a direct marketing effort is to identify your target prospects and secure

their contact info.

Technically, you can purchase mailing lists from direct marketing (DM) companies by industry. If you choose this source, look for reputable DM companies whose lists are reliable and updated. Expect to spend a bit of money for a minimum of 500 – 1000 names. Personally, I am wary of DM lists as I cannot verify how qualified their lists are; i.e. how accurate they are. I do not recommend this approach for entertainers.

A cheaper but more time-consuming and laborious approach is to put together your own database. Using Internet searches is the most cost effective way for you to develop your prospect database. It can be a time consuming process but you are almost guaranteed of qualified leads, especially in niche markets. You will be able to build a decent database by typing in specific keyword searches and searching industry-specific online directories.

For example, you might want to look for “wedding planners in Western Europe”. Specify for the freelancer to search for contacts of 100 prospects; including the email, website, contact number and contact person. Subsequently, you will filter through the contact list and qualify the list even further.

If you are corporate entertainer, your best bet is to look for marketing managers of corporate organizations as they will be the ones in charge of organizing customer events, dinners and other marketing-related events that might use your services.

You can also get a very qualified list of corporate prospects by checking out the websites of major tradeshow, exhibitors and conventions. Each of these major shows will have their own website and the website will contain a list of their exhibitors, or at least past exhibitors. This list indicates that the participating corporate organizations take part in marketing events and use events as a marketing tool for their own business.

From this list of exhibitors, choose companies that are relatively big and are likely to organize their own events for customers, dealers or internal staff. Start off by choosing tradeshow that deal more with consumer products/ services as they are more likely to offer opportunities than super niche markets.

Step 2 – Communicating Your Message

Choose how you want to market or communicate your message to your database of prospects. The two most popular methods are to email or to call.

I personally prefer to email as I find it less intrusive and I can communicate more information succinctly and effectively in a short email than a phone call.

However, it really depends on your specific market and geographical region. In some markets, a phone call and setting up a meeting may be much more effective than sending an email.

Regardless of whether you are emailing or calling, you need to write an email or a script. For purposes of discussion, I will focus on email direct marketing. But the same general points will apply to your telephone script.

A good sales letter/ email is not just about writing an email in proper grammatical English with no spelling mistakes (or the language of your target market). A good sales letter must have the

ability to communicate who you are, what you do and what you want from readers in an engaging concise matter that sells you to them in a positive way.

Here are some tips:

- Keep the email simple, short and strong. You have only have seconds to grab the reader's interest. Get to the point, from the subject line to the headlines to the message of your email. I recommend an email between $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page long or 400 words or less.
- Make your message easy to “scan”. Don't overwhelm readers with long paragraphs and lots of copy. Breaking up your email-marketing copy with punchy subheads, numbered and bulleted lists, and small bites of information will allow readers to quickly read it and grasp your main message.
- Injecting personalized comments and information into marketing emails is very strong personal communication. So, personalize the email whenever possible. Address the prospect by their name and make it clear you are familiar with their work by complementing their success on a recent project. This is all information that you can find on the prospect's social media or website.
- Avoid using text, phrases, underlines, bolds and upper case fonts that will make your email look like spam.
- Communicate a single message and a single call to action. As an artiste, you will likely be introducing yourself as well as your act. The single message should be what makes you different or why the prospect should book your act. Your call to action should be for the prospect to watch your video or visit your website.
- Proofread, and proofread again. Although this may seem obvious, proofreading is often overlooked. And typos and inaccuracies in your email-marketing copy can hurt your credibility with prospects.
- If you are emailing to a database of prospects, you can also use a mass email program such as A-Weber, Mail Chimp or Mail Blaster that can be customized individually to recipients.
- If you are sending out any kind of hard-copy direct mail to a prospect. Spend money on sourcing for coloured envelopes (different from the standard white and manila envelopes). This makes your mailer stand out from the dozens of pieces of mail that the prospect receives each week. If your envelope is hot pink in colour, it will attract the prospect to open it and be that much more memorable. It also helps them find your mailer again should they want to refer to it when you call them.

Step 3 – Following Up

This step is very important and often neglected. Following up with an email or a call will increase your chances of booking a show significantly. 90% of your targeted prospects will see your email. However, if you are lucky, about 40% will actually click to open it. And, about half of those people may actually read your message in its entirety.

Following up adds direct personal contact and reminds them of the email or incentivizes them to

read the email again. Sometimes, you can offer to email them again so they will really read the email.

In my experience, most people are quite happy to receive a follow up email or call as sometimes they were legitimately busy and overlooked the email. The follow-up gives them a mental note to look at your message properly.

Step 4 – Tracking Results

Every time you execute an email blast or direct marketing campaign, you also should take note of your conversions.

You should track how many leads you generate from your email and how many leads actually result in the booking of shows. For such niche markets that entertainers target, expect a 5% – 10% conversion rate.

Based on your results, modify your campaign to see if you get better results. Here are some tips:

- Change the subject of your email. Sometimes, certain words or phrasing can make a difference to encourage a prospect to open your email.
- Change the time you send out your emails. Most marketers agree that Mondays and Fridays are the worst days in the week send out emails.
- Avoid holiday or festive periods as well.
- Relook at the email text and content as well. Are you sending attachments that are too big? Is the email too long or not formatted for easy reading? Is your call to action clear enough?

TEMPLATES FOR SALES LETTERS/ EMAILS

Here are two templates for sales letters for two different types of clients of entertainers that are likely to get you a response.

The first letter is for show bookers and agents. For entertainers, the term “agent” is used to refer to a broker or “middle man” between a client and the entertainer. An agent or show booker can be an entertainment agent, show producer or event organizer.

The second letter is for a direct client such as a venue or organization that books entertainment.

The approach, content and delivery are very different for each type of client. A show booker or agent is much more experienced in working with entertainers. They know what you want from them and they want to know if you are a fit for them. So, being direct and giving as much information as possible succinctly is the best approach.

Direct clients may have experience working with entertainers but need to be convinced that the acts or shows they choose fit their needs. They generally prefer an entertainer to be as self-contained as possible.

Effective Sales Email to an Agent, Show Booker or Event Producer TEMPLATE

Subject: New Illusionist from (Your Country/ City)

Dear Mr. Smith,

As a talent agent, I know you are always looking for quality acts for your clients.

(OR, if you are working off a referral)

One of your entertainers, Roger Jones, gave me your contact, as he thought I might be a good fit for your agency.

I am an illusionist from (your country/ city) but am available for shows internationally (or within a specific geographical region). I am particularly interested to work in (list specific markets or venues).

What makes me unique is the fact that I (fill in your unique selling point).

My acts/ show formats are as follows:

- 8-minute specialty act
- 30min show
- Languages: (List languages that you can perform in or indicate if yours is a silent act)

You can watch a video of my performance at (give video link) to see which clients of yours I could best serve.

Please reply to this email if you would like pricing info and technical riders.

Thanks!

Sincerely,

John Doe
Illusionist Extraordinaire

Contact Number(s)
Email Address

Website – View my portfolio of work
Video Channel – Watch more videos here.

Effective Sales Email to a Venue or Organization That Books Entertainment TEMPLATE

Subject: Unique & Fresh Live Illusion Entertainment for ABC Resorts

Dear Mr. Smith,

I'm contacting you because I offer a magic & illusion entertainment package that will give your target audience of family-oriented guests a memorable experience this coming holiday season.

My illusion show will fit well with your current entertainment mix and activities such as (list existing entertainment and activities provided by the venue).

I have designed new acts for the upcoming season so you can be assured that the shows will be unique and fresh for ABC Resorts.

My pricing structure will also ensure you get the highest value for money possible with this level and quality of entertainment!

Please reply to this email and I will send you more details and a proposed entertainment program so you can quickly evaluate whether it would be worth your time to look into this.

Thanks!

Sincerely,

John Doe
Illusionist Extraordinaire

Contact Number(s)
Email Address

Website – View my portfolio of work
Video Channel – Watch videos for my signature acts here.