

Audiology and Direct Mail Lead Generation Programs

by Marc Aronson

Based on my 30 plus years working with audiologists and the understanding of the current market, I would like to provide audiologists with what I have found to be true based on my experience. Hopefully, you will find what I have to say helpful.

Some audiology practices are currently experiencing short-term success with a direct mail approach. It involves a somewhat misleading strategy, which includes giveaways.* What this campaign does do confirm that direct mail can still work. However, to achieve long-term success in a slow economy through direct mail, a practice must consistently deliver a superior product and communicate their advantage overtly with complete integrity.

The audiologist who provides “average” services, or worse, will find it difficult to create a campaign that results in an abundance of leads over the long haul. The rationale is that this provider cannot honestly make specific, strong claims and will eventually lose out to competitors who can and do so effectively. Should the average audiologist’s marketing initially drive in business through somewhat misleading communications and then fail to deliver, the abundance of unhappy patients they generate will prevent that practice from enjoying repeat business and word-of-mouth referrals, which are so essential.

A mediocre audiologist may initially receive leads via bait and switch mailers or *phony study letters*, such as the current direct mailers mentioned above, which promote a research study when the actual purpose is to drive in business and nothing else. Eventually, dishonest campaigns like these stop working and practices that use them are faced with a public that no

longer trusts their communications. A dishonest campaign also opens the door for a high integrity, superior practitioner to attack the misleading approach and take chunks of market share away. The marketing law is simply, *lies in PR always recoil upon the user*.

Yes, direct mail campaigns targeting seniors *can* generate significant response even when their mailboxes receive an overload of mailings from multiple hearing professionals. However, today it takes GREAT CONTENT to attain sufficient sustained results. Most direct mail copy that comes across my desk from audiology practices is loaded with generalities and platitudes that lack impact. This is certainly money not well spent given today’s weak economic climate and an abundance of information being available at your target market’s fingertips they can study before choosing a provider.

There are seven steps that must be carried out correctly in this economy to achieve a sustained, strong response to direct mail, or any other media, including all online outlets. The initial stage is the most essential and is a prerequisite for the others. This step I call BE SUPERIOR or DESERVE THE BUSINESS. An audiologist practice must provide a CLEARLY superior experience in comparison to its competitors. Superiority can be in terms of quality of service, convenience, consistency, customer service and/or value. For audiologists, quality of service is the most essential, but the other points should never be neglected, especially customer service. In many cases, this requires the practice to innovate what and how it provides their services so they can stand above the rest.

If carried out properly, direct mail targeting



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the senior market can still be effective and, in some cases, perform as a stellar component of a practice's promotional mix. However, you should first determine whether this will be the most cost-effective approach in your market. (On our website, we discuss the importance of surveys. One vital approach is conducting media surveys on seniors. These will enable you to quantify what media your local seniors pay attention to.)

Websites and Social Media

Everyday, prospective hearing aid wearers are spending more time on the Internet and less time with traditional media. The importance of having a website, Facebook page and YouTube channel that separate your superior practice from competitors is essential. For the time being, direct mail and newspaper advertising can be effective. However, advertising on your local newspaper's website, online yellow pages and through Google should not be ignored. We strongly urge every audiology practice to survey their local senior market on an annual basis, as seniors' media viewing habits are dynamically changing. Spending your advertising dollars wisely should never be neglected, and without annual media surveys, you are going at it at least partially blind.

** Giveaways can be very effective and we sometimes use them. The problem is usually other sections of such letters that contain dishonest and misleading content.*