

The How and Why of Direct Mail Personalization



Why does the industry insist on personalizing your direct mail pieces?

Here are just 3 reasons:

- It grabs prospective customers' attention, as it makes them feel special.
- Better targeting: You target the message to the right person.
- Better response: Because customers feel special, they take action.

So how does one personalize direct mail pieces? How far can one take it?

According to *Target Marketing Magazine*, personalization goes beyond just putting the name and address on the piece.

Personalization includes details that attract customers within a cohort, such as common hobbies, beliefs, or lifestyle. The images one chooses on the envelope can be matched to the personal likes or interests of the recipient. If the target likes golfing, then a photo of golf clubs, a long fairway or houses near a green personalizes direct mail intended for that consumer.

The offer can be personalized to match the needs of the recipient. This intelligence comes from detailed customer data that tells you they have children, or own a car. A direct mail piece that advertises your kid-friendly dine-in restaurant or your high performance auto parts store are both perfect examples of personalized mail pieces.

How Our Town America uses personalization

Our Town America, highly successful with its popular New Mover Program, uses personalization in several different ways. The company mails a personalized Welcome Package so that the new movers immediately see their family name on the decorative, over-sized envelope.

The new resident of a town sees “Welcome to the Robinson Household” rather than “current resident” or “homeowner” in the Welcome Package envelope’s address window.

The Our Town America welcome package is personalized, well designed and equipped with the psychological triggers that compel the new mover to look inside. Once the package is opened, the searching audience finds special one-time use housewarming gift certificates with proven offers from local business sponsors. It’s clear to the consumer that an extraordinary step has been taken to communicate hospitality and sincerity.

The welcome letter

In addition to the gift certificates, the Welcome Package contains a welcome letter, which is personalized to the new mover and gives a brief explanation as to why they have received the gift certificates. The letter focuses on the New Mover and their individual needs.

Personalized Gift Certificates

The new mover gift certificates from local businesses make up the heart of the New Mover Welcome Package.

Our Town America personalizes each and every gift certificate within the Welcome Package. For instance, Pete’s Pizzeria’s certificate offering 1 Free Pizza states, “Our Welcoming Gift to the Robinsons.”

This is not only attractive to the new mover, but it’s a great way for Pete, the pizzeria owner, to welcome families into his business by name.

Personalizing what the customer needs

The free housewarming offers from local businesses are targeted to the needs of someone who doesn't yet know where to locate services in their new hometown. For instance, all new movers need recommendations on where to find the best auto repair shop, bakery, hair salon, dentist, hardware store, etc.

The personalized gift certificate is designed to launch a new business relationship, not just bring in a new customer. When the Robinson couple enters Pete's Pizzeria to redeem their free pizza or other consideration, the staff sees the Robinson family name on the certificate and greets them.

"Great to see you," the employee says in greeting. "Welcome to the neighborhood!" The Robinsons have been greeted by name, which minimizes their feelings of being the newcomers in town.

Personalized customer survey

Another direct mail piece inside of the Welcome Package seeks more information from the new resident.

The New Mover Survey is personalized by listing each of the businesses that provided housewarming gift certificates within the Welcome Package. After the new mover has redeemed the gift certificates, they can rate how well each business served them and made them feel at home.

That valuable feedback is shared with each partnered business, which allows them to perfect their product/service. Surveys repeatedly show that customers prefer to do business where they feel heard and appreciated – which is why the New Mover Surveys are so valuable. As a result of personalizing the offer to match what new customers need, businesses build up their base of loyal customers. It's a win for both parties.

The "Thank You Postcard"

Our Town America incorporates a second mailing into the program. When the customers redeem their gift certificates at the store or other business, the business owner scans the 2D barcode at the point of sale system.

The scan automatically triggers a second mailing, a “Thank You Postcard” to the new mover. The business owner can include another discount or free offering, or a simple ‘Thank you’ to entice the customer to come back into the business. The “Thank You Postcard” is also personalized and allows the business owner to reach the customer yet another time.

Personalized direct mail marketing can be equated to knocking on your customer’s front door to hand them a gift as it creates familiarization where there isn’t any. By honing in and meeting customer’s wants and needs, one increases the chance of gaining a new life-long customer.

As *Target Marketing Magazine* puts it, “The more you know about your customer, the better you can create the idea of a relationship in the mind of your customer. Build up your personalization with each mailing by incorporating more data and more complex variables. This gradual buildup will give you the confidence to keep getting more personal.”