

## **How to Boost Your Direct Mail Response Rate**

By Alan Sharpe

Direct mail marketing rules are made to be broken, or so I'm told. So break this one and see what happens.

Direct mail pundits, me included, recommend that all your direct mail pieces have an offer. The offer, as you know, is the incentive that you give prospects to encourage them to respond.

Offers are usually bilateral. You promise to do something if the prospect does something. "Buy two blouses and we'll pay the shipping," for example. Or "book your appointment before 16 November and we'll send you a free Sample Seed Kit." If the prospect does nothing, you do nothing. Both of you must act if the offer is to work. Offers are bilateral.

Break this rule by making unilateral offers once in a while. Instead of asking the prospect to do something, you do something instead. That's what a car dealer in Australia did a while back. He mailed a letter to his customers and enclosed a crisp \$50 note. "Your trade-in vehicle sold much quicker than expected, so we saved ourselves a little money," explained the letter. The customer didn't have to do anything to get the \$50. The offer was unconditional, or unilateral.

You can see the value in offers that ask for nothing in return. In this case, which car dealer do you suppose customers visited the next time they were in the market for a vehicle?

I received a unilateral offer from Christopher Knight, founder and publisher of ezinearticles.com. Unannounced, he mailed me a huge coffee mug and a wee note thanking me for being an Expert Author. He didn't offer me the mug in exchange for anything.

I didn't have to mail in a coupon or take a survey or visit a website or refer my grandmother. Christopher simply made me a unilateral offer. And yet I responded by phoning him during a busy day to thank him for his kind gesture. Plus, I continued using his services. So his unilateral offer did generate a response from me after all. Funny how that works, eh?