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Part 2 — Achieving Postcard Success

Now that you understand the pyramid concept, how do you start your ascent? This section will examine all of the ingredients needed for postcard success.

Real Estate Postcards With 3-Part Harmony

Real estate agents have been using postcards to market themselves for decades. But why is it that some agents succeed time and time again, while others fail? What's the secret to postcard marketing success?

For one thing, the successful agents understand the three-part harmony of real estate postcard marketing. The three-part harmony includes element that, when combined, increase your chances of success many times over.

"Enough!" you say. "What are the three parts?"

The real estate postcard three-part harmony:

1. The right audience

2. The right offer

3. The right presentation

That's the gist of it, and here's the meat:

Part 1 – The Right Audience
When it comes to postcard marketing, the mailing list is more than a bunch of names. It's a primary ingredient of real estate postcard success. Sending the right message to the wrong audience is never right.

- Your audience should match your services
- Your mailing list should be as current as possible
- Your list should be tightly focused (buyers / sellers, neighborhood, price range, etc.)
- Your list should be easy to validate, update and manage (electronic format)

Part 2 – The Right Offer
You do have an offer, don't you? Without an offer, a real estate postcard has little chance of motivating the reader. Without a strong offer, a postcard is just paper.

- Your offer should be relevant to your services.
- Your offer should be unique from other offers (competitors).
- Your offer should have a high perceived value.
- Your offer should motivate the recipient to take action.

Part 3 – The Right Presentation

Up to this point, you have a nice duet going. You're sending the right offer to the right audience. Great! But we want a three-part harmony, so now we must add the third element—presentation. This refers to how your postcard looks.

- Your presentation should showcase the offer.
- Your presentation should make the offer impossible to miss.
- Your presentation should be professional and organized.
- Your presentation reflects directly upon you!

There's a power in threes. The three-legged stool. The three branches of government. The three tenors. And now you can add real estate postcards to the list, because now you know the three-part harmony of postcard success—the audience, the offer and the presentation.

As we progress through this book, we will examine these three elements in much greater detail—plus a whole lot more!

The Mailing List

In this section, the list refers to your mailing list (a.k.a. database). These are the folks you'll send your postcards to—in hopes of generating a response and, ultimately, some new business. These are your prospective clients, or in some cases previous clients.

When it comes to postcard marketing, the mailing list is more than a bunch of names. It's a primary ingredient of real estate postcard success. Because sending the right message to the wrong audience is never right.

Fundamentals of a good mailing list:

- Your audience should match your services.

- Your list should be as current as possible.

- Your list should be tightly focused (buyers vs. sellers, neighborhood, price range, etc.).

- Your list should be easy to validate, update and manage (electronic format).

Remember, your list connects you with your audience, and your audience determines your postcard marketing success. So give your list the attention it deserves. Ask all the hard questions: Is my list current? Are these the right people to focus on, given my objectives? Is my list too broad? Should I segment it into categories?

Segmenting Your List
When you segment a mailing list, you're able to be more specific with your message. For example, if your audience included homeowners as well as renters, you could split them into separate lists. This would allow you to tailor a message for each group individually. You could speak directly to renters by offering them a first-time home buyer's seminar.

That's just one of many ways to segment your list. You can also break it up by age, neighborhood, buyer vs. seller, prospect vs. customer, home value, etc. It takes more effort to do this, but in this age of information clutter you have to make your message more relevant to make a connection. Remember The Pyramid?

Where to Find a List
Basically, you have two ways to come up with your mailing list—you can build it, or you can buy it.

Building a List
If you build a mailing list yourself, it will likely be reliable and well-targeted. But it will also be a lot of work. To get started on the right foot, build your list using a common software application like Excel, Act or Top Producer. These programs simplify list

management, and they allow you to export your list into a format that postcard vendors prefer, such as a comma-separated values (CSV) format.

Buying a List
If you buy a list, there's virtually no effort involved on your part, but you'll of course pay for it. Using a data company like InfoUSA or MelissaData, you can enter a series of demographic choices (location, household size, income level, etc.) and then purchase the list right from the website. You might pay anywhere from $200 to $2,000 on such a list, depending on the number of recipients and the types of demographic choices you make.

"Hybrid" Options
Some web-based postcard vendors partner with data companies to allow customers to build a list during the postcard ordering process. ColorDirect.com has found a way to do this without charging extra for all the addresses and demographic choices made. As of this writing, they're the only postcard vendor I know who offers such a cost-effective approach. I don't mean for this to be a repetitive plug for ColorDirect, but they do many things well, and I'd be remiss not to point them out to you.

Common Threads
Regardless of what option you take when building your list, you need to take the list seriously. An good postcard sent to a bad list is a bad mailing. With any list, the three most important factors are relevance, accuracy and currency.

- **Relevance** -- Your list should include the kinds of people who can relate to your services and would be likely to respond to your offer. If you sell luxury property, don't send your postcards to lower-income neighborhoods. If you're offering a market report for the Belle View neighborhood, don't send it to the folks over in Valley View.

- **Accuracy** -- The big list providers such as InfoUSA use double or triple verification to check the names and addresses in their databases. This reduces the number of undeliverable addresses (wasted postage).

- **Currency** -- There's a lot of flux when it comes to mailing lists. People move, new neighborhoods arise, streets get renamed, etc. An old list is a bad list and will result in a higher number of undeliverable postcards. So make sure your list is as "fresh" as possible.

> **Postcard Tip:** Undelivered postcards will not come back to you unless you mail them First Class (more expensive). First Class mail comes with a "return to sender" service. But when you send postcards by Standard Mail (more common), your undelivered postcards will be discarded. Even with the most current mailing list possible, there will always be a certain percentage of undeliverable addresses.

The Postcard Design

When I'm coaching someone on postcard marketing, and they ask about design, I usually start with this comment: Design around your message, not the other way around.

What I mean is that your postcard's design should support the message you're trying to convey. It should help you get your point across, make your offer understood, and generate the desired response. But that's all the design should do.

Postcard marketing is communication, not art. Real estate postcards should not be designed with beauty in mind—they should be designed with communication in mind. This doesn't mean your postcards should be ugly. On the contrary, an attractive postcard will showcase your professionalism. My point is simply that designing for the sake of design is better left for art classes, not direct mail.

The Art of "Invisible" Design
In marketing, design works best when people don't even notice it. In other words, the audience should immediately see and understand the message being conveyed. They should not stop and say, "Oh, this is pretty." Design should help readers find and absorb your message. It should not slow them down or distract them from the message.

Ever been to a website that was so clean and usable you immediately found your way around? Netflix comes to mind for me. The first time I went to Netflix.com, I found my way around quickly and began using the website right away. Sure, there were design elements, but I hardly noticed them. Why? Because the design's sole purpose was to help me find my way around the website—without having to stop and think about it.

Does this mean Netflix skimps on design? No. On the contrary, they've put a lot of thought into their website's design. They put so much effort into designing the site that I did not even see the design, though it helped me achieve my goals.

This is the concept of "invisible design." The design is there, but because it's sole purpose is helping you comprehend something, you hardly even notice it. You immediately find the message and act upon it—because the design paved the way for you.

When I talk about "invisible" design, I'm not saying your postcard can't be attention-getting. What I'm saying is your postcard should get attention for the right reasons. It should capture the reader's attention with a powerful message and an offer of value. The design should support this, not overshadow it. Design should reinforce the message—it should never steal attention away from the message.

Message First, Design Second
All too often, I see marketers struggle over how they should design a postcard, *before* they even know the postcard's message or objective. This is completely backwards. You