



Let's dispel a common misperception: You are not in the mortgage-brokering business. You are in the marketing-of your mortgage-brokering business. With that in mind, you'll likely be more successful if you focus on marketing. A simple definition of "marketing" is "presenting the right message to the right market with the right media." When thinking about marketing, however, most people don't usually think about direct-response marketing. Lately, most mortgage brokers think of "e-marketing," "Internet leads," "pay-per-call" and all the other trendy marketing methods in use today. But as an old standard, direct response marketing can be surprisingly effective when done right. And it will help you control your destiny. The secret to successful direct-response marketing is in following 10 basic rules.

#### 1. Always Make an Offer

With direct marketing — or selling with print media — your task is to make a direct offer that compels consumers to respond. The more interesting and appealing the offer, the better. Never end a "conversation" in any media without making a direct offer. Check your phone-book ad. Odds are, there's no offer. Many businesses even run newspaper ads with no offers. Rather, they have "implied" offers. These types of ads essentially say, "Here we are; here's what we do." Making a solid offer, however, leads to the next rule.

#### 2. Give a Reason to Respond Now

Your offer must compel your potential clients or referral sources to contact you. Your goal is immediate response. A plain-vanilla offer won't do it. For example, if you legally can do so in your state, offer a certain dollar amount off closing costs with an expiring deadline, or offer loans with attractive rates and terms for a certain time period. Your goal is to get consumers to respond when they see your ad, not to merely "think about it" indefinitely.

#### 3. Give Clear Instructions

Any marketing piece — whether it's an ad, flier, sales letter, Web site or phone script — should lead prospective clients or referral sources to take action. That is, you must tell them exactly what you want them to do, how and when you want them to do it, and what will happen when they do. Don't send anything that doesn't have clear instructions.

#### 4. Track and Measure

You need real, hard data to make intelligent

# THE 10 RULES OF SUCCESSFUL DIRECT-RESPONSE MARKETING

marketing decisions. Tracking your efforts means accurately collecting the information you need to determine what advertising is working and what isn't, which offer is pulling and which isn't, and what marketing campaigns have traction. It will lead to knowing your return on investment (ROI), which is the key barometer of a marketing campaign's success. Set up systems to capture the data you need, and set aside time to do the necessary analysis. It will prove profitable. After all, you can only accurately improve what you can measure. Otherwise, how will you empirically know you're getting better results? From now on, do not spend any marketing dollars without tracking the ROI.

#### 5. Make Branding a Byproduct

Traditional brand-building is fine for giant companies that have huge budgets and that are vying for store shelf space and consumer recognition. If you are the CEO of a large corporation and are playing with other peoples' marbles, then by all means, buy brand identity. But if you are an entrepreneur or a sales professional investing your own marbles, then focus on response and sales. If you develop brand-recognition along the way, that's great. But you may not need to spend time and money exclusively on creating it. If a marketing piece only identifies you but doesn't ask readers to take some sort of clear action, then it's an "image" or brand-building piece. Just putting your image out there rarely helps pay the bills, so don't bother doing it.

#### 6. Follow Up

If someone reads your ad and calls your office to ask a question, make sure the person receiving the call does something with that opportunity. That staff person should capture the caller's name, address and e-mail address and offer to schedule an appointment or provide more information. Next, put those names on your monthly newsletter mailing list. If you don't publish a monthly newsletter, it's time to start. It likely will be one of the most-read pieces of direct mail you send. Then, follow up regularly. Fortune is in the follow-up — most people give up too easily.

#### 7. Use Strong Copy

Sales and subtlety rarely go hand in hand. There is enormous, overwhelming competition for consumer attention. Use compelling copy in your marketing materials. For instance, sell yourself as a "wizard" who possesses the "magical solutions" to consumers' challenges. Use personality in your copy; don't focus solely on the loan products or services like everyone else does. Draw attention to yourself

and to your positioning as the expert in a particular niche. You can't be all things to all people, so don't try. It is key to devise an automated system that attracts good leads, repels bad leads, screens leads, presells leads and has people wanting to meet or talk with you about your offer. And always remember: Features rarely sell. Only benefits applied directly to consumers actually matter to them.

#### 8. Mimic Mail-Order Advertising

Ads for any business should mimic mail-order ads because they're usually a great example of many of the previous rules. Compile a file of mail-order ads that ask you to buy or at least request free information. Whenever you prepare or approve your ads, fliers, sales letters or Web sites, get out this file and compare. Yours should look like the ones in the file.

#### 9. Measure Results

If an ad brings in new clients, it is good. If it doesn't, it's not. Don't get caught up in response rate percentages. Focus on the ROI, which is key to measuring an ad's success. And remember: If you want to stand out from the ordinary, you must ignore the criticism your extraordinary efforts will attract from the critical majority.

#### 10. Get Tough

Become disciplined, and go on a "direct-response-marketing diet." Success is mostly about behavior, and with just a little effort, you can become a lean, mean direct marketer: Purge your business of junk, such as pretty brochures that violate most or all of the above rules, dead ads that just take up space, and subtle, boring sales letters. Decide on a marketing plan. Get some tools, such as new ads, fliers, coupons, sales letters, Web sites and scripts for handling incoming calls. Count. See rule No. 4: Track and measure. Mentally exercise. Start reading books and articles, listening to recordings and going to seminars about direct marketing. Don't let anything into your direct-response marketing world that doesn't belong there. Just say "no" to anything that doesn't conform to the 10 rules. By following these rules, you can better control your destiny and have successful direct response marketing.

To learn how you can make at least TRIPLE your current commissions using these 10 rules, email me.

*Christopher Hurn is the president, chief executive officer and cofounder of Mercantile Commercial Capital, LLC. He can be contacted at 866.386.0857, or by e-mail at [churn@lendingssuccessionline.com](mailto:churn@lendingssuccessionline.com).*