



Boost Customer Confidence

How to combat “too-good-to-be-true” objections

I recently spoke with a client who said he was having trouble getting customers (not prospects) to respond to his direct mail offer because they said it sounded “too good to be true.”

The offer is a club membership. Membership provides church choir directors with regular shipments of new choral products like sheet music and full-length demo CDs to preview before buying. Membership also includes a rebate that lets customers recover the entire cost of membership with their first order. The preview products are “theirs to keep” at no additional cost, whether or not they order. The goal of the Choral Club mailing is to encourage more orders of new products and increase the average order size by reducing the risk of ordering unknown pieces of music for an entire choir.

From a marketing perspective, this seems like a no-brainer: Why would a customer who already orders choir music from this company not join? The rebate removes any financial risk.

However, from the customer’s perspective, the offer sounds unbelievably generous. So, what should you do when faced with this buying objection?

Look for opportunities to instill confidence, remove the too-good-to-be-true objection and encourage response by neutralizing the risk of disappointment. Here are some tips for accomplishing these goals. A couple are particularly appropriate for direct

mail; others apply to all types of media, both online and offline.

■ Start with your guarantee.

While a simply stated, ironclad guarantee is a “must” for first-time triers, it’s also a reassurance policy for established customers. Your guarantee provides a foundation for building credibility.



The cover of the Choral Club brochure helps to overcome too-good-to-be-true customer objections by showing recipients everything they would have received if they’d been a member the previous year.

Don’t just state your guarantee on the back of your order form or at the bottom of your response device. Showcase it as an important reminder that you truly value your customer. Lands’ End recently devoted half a catalog’s inside spread—a major hot

spot—to its guarantee, “Guaranteed. Period.®”

One more thing: Don’t let your attorney write your guarantee. The more ifs, ands, buts and mousetype you use, the less convincing your guarantee becomes.

■ Let your customers speak for you.

Who knows better than a real customer whether or not your offer really is as good as it sounds?

In the case of my client with the too-good-to-be-true club membership offer, I interviewed several club members, then used their “true story” testimonials to counter the buying objection. And I didn’t confine testimonials to the letter or brochure.

Instead, I focused reader attention on the testimonials by using them as outer envelope teaser copy, Johnson box copy at the very top of the sales letter, as well as throughout the brochure. If you only have two or three seconds to snag a reader’s attention, one of the best hooks is strong testimonial copy that tells a benefit story of genuine interest to the reader.

■ Put a sample in their hands.

When appropriate, prove your point by putting a free product sample into the hands of your prospective customer. If it’s logistically and financially doable, test inserting a sample directly into

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your mail piece ... or making it the offer of your lead generation mailing.

Free samples have been used by a variety of direct marketers to counter the objection, "I can't believe it's true." The Peruvian Connection, for example, has glue-tipped swatches of the luxury fiber alpaca used to weave its sweaters into its catalogs, and *Daily Word* magazine has included actual-size samples of its pocket-size magazine in a 5" x 7 1/4" prospecting mailing.

While at first it may seem expensive, the cost of a free sample may turn out to be one of your best marketing investments to secure new customers. Always test before rolling out to measure response and financial impact.

■ **Variations on the theme.** Perhaps it's not appropriate to include a free sample in your mailing. Here are some variations to adapt to your own marketing situation.

1. Free trial. Offer free use of your

product for two weeks or some other appropriate amount of time. If customers are not completely satisfied, they can return it for a complete refund. Or, for a truly risk-free trial, make it a "Send No Money" offer.

2. Free virtual tour. This doubt-reducing offer once required producing and mailing an expensive video cassette or CD-ROM. Thanks to the Web, you now can use Internet fulfillment to provide prospects with the experience. It's an appropriate offer for universities, retirement communities, marketers of real estate, vacation homes, cruise companies, resorts, and a multitude of other destinations. Make sure you track and measure individual responses so you have marketing data for future marketing communications.

3. Free demonstration. The more expensive the product, the less likely a customer is to order without first "experiencing" the product. Like the free tour, a free virtual demonstration is almost as good as seeing the product

in action first-hand in a store, and is a natural objection-minimizer for high-end merchandise such as wood-working tools, spas and saunas, home appliances, even automobiles.

One more thing: A picture really can be worth a thousand words.

If you can show exactly what people are receiving, you add credibility to the claims made in headlines, body copy and photo captions. As an example, the Choral Club brochure cover mentioned earlier shows everything the choir director would have received if he or she had been a member the previous year. It's a tactic for establishing value that, in turn, addresses the too-good-to-be-true objection. ■

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