

Article: Guerrilla Insights into Direct Response **by Jay Conrad Levinson**

Direct response marketing is a lot different from indirect response marketing, although guerrillas like it best when the two are teamed up. The first is geared to obtain orders right here and right now. The second is geared to obtain orders eventually. Although a fair amount of standard, indirect marketing often is necessary to set the stage, to make prospects ready to buy, and to separate your company from strangers, it's when you initiate direct marketing that you first taste blood.

As you well know, we are living in the Age of Information, most of it very easy to obtain. But information is hardly enough for a guerrilla. And information is not insight. It's the combination of information and thought that leads to insight and it's insight that's going to make you a stand-out in the direct response arena.

The first insight for you to absorb is that direct response marketing either works immediately or not at all. Unlike standard marketing which changes attitudes slowly and ultimately leads to a sale if you go about things right, guerrilla direct response marketing changes minds and attitudes instantly and leads to a sale instantly if you go about things right.

When it works, you know it. You don't have to sit around and wonder. You don't have to wait months and months for your message to penetrate the mind of your prospect. Your time-dated direct marketing offer either results in a sale right now -- or it doesn't.

To succeed with direct marketing in any medium, remember always:

1. Your offer is omnipotent. The best presentation in the world has a major uphill battle if you make a weak or ordinary offer.
2. The market to whom you direct your message can make or break your campaign. Saying the right thing to the wrong people results in no sale.
3. What you say and how you say it is easily as important as to whom you say it. Talk in terms of your prospects and how your offer benefits them.
4. Carefully planning every cent of your campaign for maximum profits requires as much creativity as your message. Guerrillas excel at this.
5. The more that people have been exposed to your other marketing, the more readily they'll accept what you offer with your direct marketing.

Some principles of indirect marketing apply to direct marketing. You must still talk of the prospect, not yourself, and you must make a clear and cogent offer. But from that point on, direct marketing is a whole new ballgame. And it's one that you can win with the insights of the guerrilla.

Stupid mistakes in horrid abundance have been made by otherwise bright companies when testing the direct response waters. Fortunately, guerrillas can learn from these blunders, making those waters a bit safer. Listing them would take an endless series of books, but it's worth your time if I make a start by providing insight into ten of the most notable:

- * Failure to attract attention at the outset dooms many brilliant campaigns before they have a chance to shine. Envelopes, opening lines, mail subject lines and first impressions are the gates to your offer. Open them wide.

- * Not facing the reality of a direct marketing explosion relegates your attempt to the ordinary, which means the ignored. Guerrillas say things to rise above the din, to be noticed and desired in a sea of marketers.

- * Focusing your message on yourself instead of your prospect will usually send your effort to oblivion. Prospects care far more about themselves than they care about you. So talk to them about themselves.

- * Not knowing precisely who your market is will send you into the wrong direction. Research into pinpointing that market will be some of the most valuable time you devote to your direct marketing campaign.

- * Mailing or telephoning to other than honest prospects wastes your time and money. If you make your offer to people who don't really have a need for your offering, they'll be an incredibly tough sale.

- * Initiating direct response marketing without specific objectives gives you too hazy a target for bull's eyes. Begin by creating the response method for your prospects so you'll know what your message should say.

- * Featuring your price before you stress your benefit will be telling people what they don't want to know yet. First, your job is to make them want what you are offering, then you can tell them the price.

- * Concentrating on your price before your offer is wasting a powerful selling point. Even if your price is the lowest,

people care more about how they'll gain from purchasing. Give your low price at the right time.

- * Failing to test all that can be tested is a goof-off of the highest order. Test your price points, opening lines, subject lines, envelope teaser lines, benefits to stress, contact times and mailing lists to know the real winners.

* Setting the wrong price means you've failed in your testing and your research. Guerrillas are sensitive to their market and their competition, testing prices and constantly subjecting them to the litmus test of profits.

As direct response vehicles become more sophisticated and prolific, guerrillas have the insight to zero in on the exact people to contact, so as not to waste time or money on strangers. Successful mailings to strangers net as high as two percent response rates. Successful mailings to customers and qualified prospects net up to ten percent. Precision leads to profits.

Cool Site of the Day: Guerrilla Mktg for the New Millenium

Jay Conrad Levinson is the creator of the Guerrilla Marketing series of books - the best selling series of business books in history. He is also responsible for some of the most successful ad campaigns in history, including *the* most successful in history: The Marlboro Man. Jay is responsible for countless small businesses becoming huge household names. Learn how he does this in his latest book: "Guerrilla Marketing for the New Millennium": http://www.roibot.com/gm.cgi?R17909_swm6a