



Information for Law Firms On Direct Mail



USING DIRECT MAIL TO PROMOTE YOUR FIRM

Direct mail refers to communications sent to clients and non-clients aimed at encouraging the recipient to use services that your firm can provide.

Direct mail can be used to gain new clients by:

- Introducing these non-clients to the firm.
- Encouraging potential clients to try the firm's services.
- Encouraging referrals from existing clients.

Direct mail can be used to increase work from existing clients by:

- Informing clients of a new service.
- Reminding them of an old service.
- Educating them about the possibility that they may require a particular service.
- Giving them an incentive to use a particular service.

Direct mail can be used to promote loyalty among existing clients by:

- Offering loyal clients a bonus in the form of a discount or similar promotion.
- Keeping clients informed.
- Expanding the range of services a client uses.

What Direct Mail Involves

Direct mail initiatives, usually called mailshots, tend to have the following features:

- The central or lead document is usually presented in a letter format.
- They tend to be used to promote a specific service or offering.
- An incentive to recipients to respond is regularly incorporated.
- The correspondence should be personalised to a named individual.
- Often included is a leaflet about the promotion and / or about the firm.

The response you receive will vary according to several factors such as the offering and targeted recipients. The Irish Direct Mail Marketing Association reports that a response rate of between 1 and 5 per cent is what most mailshots generate.

When planning a mailshot, ensure that you have the resources to handle a 10 per cent response – even though it is unlikely you will achieve anything as high as this.

If a mailshot involves some sort of response and you have a large number to send out, consider sending it out in batches over a period of time. This helps spread the workload involved in getting everything ready and also ensures that responses required are more manageable.

Important Disclaimer – Please Note

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ENSURING YOU COMPLY WITH ADVERTISING REGULATIONS

Any direct mail initiatives being contemplated by a solicitor in practice need to be checked against the Solicitors (Advertising) Regulations 2002 and subsequent practice notes. These rules can be accessed on the Society's website at:

<http://www.lawsociety.ie/Solicitors/Regulations/Solicitor-Advertising/> /

Regulation 13(a) provides that an unsolicited approach may not be made where it is likely to bring the profession into disrepute. Regulation 13(b) provides that approaches may not be made in inappropriate locations or at, or adjacent to a calamitous event.

Regulation 4 should be carefully read. It prohibits all promoting and advertisements which:

- Are likely to bring the profession into disrepute,
- Are in bad taste,
- Reflect unfavourably on other solicitors,
- Assert that a solicitor has specialist knowledge superior to other solicitors,
- Are false or misleading,
- Are contrary to public policy.

Regulation (4)(a)(viii) bans promoting and advertisements which refer to claims or possible claims for damages for personal injuries, the outcome of such claims or the provision of services by solicitors in conjunction with such claims.

Regulation 4(a)(ix) prohibits promoting and advertisements which "solicit, encourage or offer any inducement" to make such claims.

Regulation 4(b) specifies that advertisements generally shall not include more than: the solicitor's name, address, telephone and fax numbers, place of business and location of information provided by the solicitor that is accessible electronically; particulars of the solicitor's qualifications and legal expertise; factual information on the legal services and areas of law to which the services relate; particulars of charges; and any other information permitted by Regulation 5 of these regulations.

Regulation 5 contains a list of the "other information" permitted by the regulations, such as hours of business, job descriptions, membership of organisations, reference to other clients (with that client's consent) and other miscellaneous information.

Regulation 9(a) is also especially important to note. It forbids the inclusion of any words or phrases which suggest that legal services relating to contentious business will be provided at no cost or at a reduced cost – such as "no foal no fee", "most cases settle out of court" or "insurance cover arranged to cover legal costs".

No promoting or advertisement can contain cartoons, dramatic or emotive words or pictures, nor can it refer to calamitous events such as a train or bus crash.

Regulation 9 also prohibits reference to a solicitor's willingness to make home or hospital visits - as this can be interpreted as a form of 'ambulance chasing'.

PLANNING A MAILSHOT

You begin planning a mailshot by deciding what you intend to offer the recipients. This might be a new service, an enhancement of an old service, the opportunity to try your firm, an introduction to your firm, or a quotation.

You then decide to whom you wish to send this offer. You may opt for existing clients, lapsed clients or a completely new target of prospective clients.

If you are targeting existing or old clients and you have their details on computer, it is often possible to mail-merge their details quickly into a direct mail letter.

If you are buying a list of potential clients through a mailing house, they will usually supply details that you can mail-merge into your mailshot also.

The more personalised the direct mail letter, the more likely it is to achieve a response.

Using an Incentive

You may decide to encourage recipients to respond to your direct mailshot by offering them an incentive. Depending on the purpose of the mailshot, this may take various forms.

If you are trying to gain new clients, you might offer a free initial meeting, a regular newsletter, or a free on-line question forum.

Whatever the reason, incentives used should have the following three characteristics:

- They should be likely to be attractive to recipients.
- They should be relevant to the rest of the mailshot.
- If taken up by all who are sent the mailshot, they should not leave you broke.

The following are incentive approaches commonly used in direct marketing:

- A prize draw. This incentive is frequently used to encourage recipients to verify details, request further information or attend an event.
- A free gift. This type of incentive is more appropriate where you are asking the recipient to spend money or as an encouragement to purchase something.
- A discount voucher. Providing those who register with the promise of a discount.
- The offer of free services. You could offer the first consultation free or free analysis of the client's situation, etc. This may be offered to encourage recipients to attend your offices to discuss their case or to research further information. Solicitors should check to ensure that anything being offered as an incentive still keeps them compliant with Advertising Regulations.

Another important thing to remember is that whatever the offer you must be able to fulfil it should the maximum expected response occur, i.e. if everyone who received a mailshot were to take up the offer you must be in a position to supply it and have the staff to cope with the response.

ORGANISING A MAILSHOT

Having identified who is to receive your letter, what you want to offer them and whether you want to include any incentive, you now need to decide how you will present these in the mailshot and how you will ask recipients to respond.

Drafting the Letter

A direct mail letter will usually include the following elements:

- An outline of the purpose of the mailshot,
- An incentive,
- A call to action,
- A response method.

The body of the letter can generally be set out in the following way:

Address and salutation: The letter should have the recipient's name and address on the top left hand side and then open with their name.

First paragraph: Introduce the firm and the offer.

Second paragraph: Give further details about the firm including credibility "hooks" and the reason behind the offer.

Third paragraph: Give further details about the offer and the incentive.

Fourth paragraph: Call to action and identify response method.

Final paragraph: Close and sign off.

The letter should be no longer than one page long and needs to be upbeat, positive and easy to read.

Producing the Letter and Inserts

Depending on the number of letters being sent, you will have a number of options regarding how you produce the letter and different ways to personalise your correspondence.

You can print the letter onto headed paper from your computer, mail merging each recipient's name and address with a generic letter. Each letter will need to be signed unless you are able to scan your signature in to your computer and then print it off so that it still looks as if it has been written.

Another option is to print a master copy, sign it and then get it printed on to your letterhead by your stationery printer. You can then mail merge names and addresses of recipients onto these. However, be careful of print quality and ensure the end product does not look like something that has been mass produced.

The method that works out most economically will depend on the resources you have available and how many letters you plan to send out. Avoid sending out letters that are not personalised. 'Dear Sir/Madam' is now quite out of date and reflects badly on the professionalism of a legal firm.

An enquiry card and /or a return envelope may very likely need to be included. These often require a good deal of organising and need to be carefully planned well ahead of time. For instance, you may need to get a Freepost licence from An Post and then get details of this printed on to envelopes being inserted.

Response Mechanism

Your mailshot needs to include a way for recipients to respond and take up any offer made.

Different postal response mechanisms include:

- Freepost or postage paid postcard.
- Form on the letter or stand alone and free post envelope.
- Voucher or letter to be presented on attendance.
- Freephone or LoCall telephone number – such as an 1850 or 1890 number.

The first three mechanisms should be personalised where possible. Where a postal response is an option, the recipient's name and address label might be placed on the response side. This might also be done with a form or voucher. Apart from lessening the respondent's work, it also gives you an audit trail for each response.

It is perfectly acceptable to offer recipients access to a number of different response mechanisms, i.e. a postcard and telephone number. Ease of use and simplicity is the key. The response mechanism chosen may depend on your resources - such as staff availability to handle incoming telephone calls.

Enclosing Information About your Firm

You may choose to include a leaflet about your firm with the letter. This can build credibility and give the recipient a broader view of both your firm and the offer.

The format and type of leaflet used will depend on the contents of the mailshot.

Listed below is a number of different approaches that can be used:

- The leaflet is a general one about the firm and the services it can offer clients.
- The leaflet is a specific one about the service being promoted through the direct mailshot.

The leaflet is a specific one to the offer.

Again, the method you use may be dictated by the resources you have available and whether you already have any marketing materials available to use.

BUDGETING FOR DIRECT MAIL

Any direct mail promotion will have the following cost elements:

- Postage.
- Materials, i.e. envelopes, printed letters, brochures, etc.
- Offer cost.
- Staff time.
- Cost of mailing list, (if purchased).

Direct mail promotions can be costed per 10,000 addresses. Obviously, where you are using lower numbers then you might cost it by the tens or hundreds. However, any reduction in numbers will not necessarily show a pro-rata reduction in cost. This is because of the set-up charges, etc. which will not reduce irrespective of the numbers.

Below are examples of two mailshots and of the costs incurred:

Mailshot No.1

Quantity	1,000		
Target audience	Non-clients		
Elements	Personalised letter, leaflet and response form		
Postage		1,000 X €0.55	€550.00
Materials:	Envelopes	1,000	€26.00
	Printed letters (externally)	1,000	€220.00
	Leaflets	1,000 X €0.50	€500.00
	Response forms	1,000	€50.00
Reply-paid postage for an estimated response of 10%		100 X €0.55	€55.00
Incentive			€135.00
List		1,000	€135.00
Total Cost			€1,671.00

Total cost of this mailshot equates to €1.67 for every letter sent

Mailshot No.2

Quantity	200		
Target audience	Clients		
Elements	Personalised letter, brochure and response form		
Postage		200 X €0.55	€110.00
Materials:	Letter (produced internally)	200 x €0.12	€24.00
	Envelopes	200	€5.40
	Leaflets	200 x €0.75	€150.00
Reply – paid postage for an estimated response of 10%		20 X €0.55	€11.00
Incentive			€135.00
Total cost			€435.40

Total cost of this mailshot equates to €2.18 for every letter sent

As can be seen from the above, although the mailing to 200 is much simpler with the letters being printed on the computer, no mailing list purchased, no pre-printed response form, etc., the cost per letter is actually higher.

If time was factored into costs, the result would be an even greater disparity - since time spent planning and writing tends to be relatively fixed, regardless of mailing size.

SAMPLE DIRECT MAIL LETTERS

Moriarty Solicitors
4 Grand Parade, Cork, Co. Cork
Telephone 021 778 9977 Fax 021 778 9971
Email: info@moriartysolrs.ie
Web: www.moriartysolicitors.ie

David Anyone
Anywhere Road
Cork
Co. Cork

23rd March 2011

Book Just Published on Succession

Dear David,
Over the last year I wrote a book outlining the whole area of succession, drafting a will and executorship.

The book is due to be launched at Cork Court House on Thursday 7th April and it is called 'Everything You Need to Know about Wills'.

I'm writing to you now to invite you to the launch. Please find enclosed a printed invite with details of time etc. and I request that people planning to attend RSVP as soon as possible.

There are complimentary copies of the book set aside for the first 20 valued clients like you who book to attend the launch.

I hope you can make the launch. As always, please contact me if I may be able to assist or provide advice at any time.

Kind regards,

Mary Joy Moriarty
Enc.

Sample Mailshot Letter

Hughes & Associates Solicitors

Lumiera Buildings, Barna Road, Galway

Telephone 091 778 9977 Fax 091 778 9971

Email: info@paulhughesbarna.ie Web: www.paulhughesbarna.ie

Niamh Anyone
Anywhere Road
Salthill
Galway

23rd March 2011

Writing a Will

Dear Niamh

One thing many of us are slow to do is to investigate what arrangements would be best to have in place should we die. We are also slow to draft a will and ensure that wealth and possessions are passed to people as we would want them to be.

This can turn out to be very unfortunate. Without planning, for example, your estate can end up liable for taxes that are legitimately avoidable.

Throughout the month of April, Hughes and Associates are focusing on succession and on drafting wills and will be offering a range of supports to people who have not got organised in this regard yet:

- One-to-one advice sessions on succession, associated tax matters and the practicalities of drafting a will are to be provided to 40 people – free of charge. These will be made available on a first come, first served basis.
- A number of information booklets covering the same matters will be available to people who contact us and request copies of these.
- Detailed information on these matters will be made available on our website.

If you want to reserve a one-to-one advice session or receive the information booklets, please complete the enclosed response card and post it to us – Freepost. Alternatively, telephone us at LoCall number 1890 66 66 66.

Information will be posted on our website: www.paulhughesbarna.ie

I hope this initiative can benefit you.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Hughes
Enc.

EVALUATING DIRECT MAIL INITIATIVES

It is generally advised that you keep a close check on the response you receive from any direct mail promotion that you undertake.

Option 1 – Evaluating on an Immediate Financial Return Basis

In order to evaluate whether a direct mail exercise is a feasible and cost-efficient method of gaining clients for your firm, you need to look at both the response you hope to receive and the increased income that this response should generate.

Example

If you are trying to create demand for your probate services, you need to forecast what sort of response you need to receive in order to pay for the planned mailshot.

If you forecast a 1% response, which, based on a mailshot of 200 is two responses, would two new clients pay for the promotion?

1% of 200 mailshots	2
Expected revenue per probate client	€375.00
Direct cost associated with this work	€120.00
Profit per probate job done	€255.00

Therefore if 1% of those mailed converts to a sale, the revenue raised is €510.00.

If the cost of the mailshot is approximately €435.40, the promotion has covered its costs and made a profit of €74.60 for the firm.

Option 2 – Evaluating the Longer Term Effect

It should be noted that a promotion such as the one described above might have an easily measured response in the short term but also a second stage effect over a longer period of time.

By keeping a close record of income coming in related to probate work and comparing what is done over a period of time with previous performance, you can check whether the trend is up, level or down. Any promotion you have undertaken should be taken into account when analysing why the trend is a particular way.

It should be noted that the above is a general example only. Though the promotion has made a profit, sending 200 mailshots may not be the most efficient way of gaining two new clients in the short term