

Candid Advice About Starting YOUR OWN MAIL ORDER BUSINESS

The best education you can get in mail order is by doing. This is not to say you shouldn't read everything you can get your hands on, only that the real education comes when you actually start trying some of the things you hear and read about. Hopefully, you will be able to do this without falling prey to any of the mail order con artists (there are plenty of those). The best way to avoid scams is to forget about "overnight riches." Find honest products from people and companies you can trust. Don't fall for those fancy ads selling instant import plans, below "wholesale" merchandise, or up-front fee book distributorships. If it were that easy you would never even hear about it.

Step one is to look for and join a reputable mail order association. There are some that enjoy the respect of ethical mail order entrepreneurs. One of those is **Independent Direct Mail Association (IDMA)**, an association of dedicated, honest mail order dealers. These people cannot afford to cheat, lie or mislead because everyone knows who they are and where to find them! On the contrary, they will go out of their way to help you succeed. Write to them! Ask questions and listen to what they have to say. Look for other members with similar interests (as well as potential customers). Contact these people! Get to know them. You will find them to be some of the most helpful — and the nicest people you ever met!

Step two is to write off for information on interesting offers and "big mail". This lets you review hundreds of offers and many publications at a nominal cost. Don't be in a hurry to subscribe or invest, take a good look around first and buy only what you know to be good. When you aren't sure, ask someone (like a fellow member)! Most publications have advice and information columns that you should read and store for future reference. If you have the time and money to buy and read a few books on the subject, that's all the better. But always remember advice and book learning is *theory and background*. Read other accounts with an eye to **Improve** and **Adapt** what they did to your situation. No one has ever had a corner on the only way to do it in mail order!

Step three is to decide upon a product – preferably; a line of related products. The basic choices are information, services, plans and merchandise. Some of these are "one-time" (like copier) sales, while others are refillable (diet supplements) or expendable (paper clips). Always be on the lookout for additional products that should appeal to the same customers for your "line." The best advice of all... start with what you already know!

Now, step four: who to sell to? Your market can be inside, outside or in-between the inner (mail order dealers) and outer (not in mail order) circles. If you know your product well you can identify and locate the most promising market segment. Later on you might want to consult a professional mailing list broker for more marketing advice.

The safest way to venture into mail order is to start small, test the waters and learn as you grow. Don't even try direct mailing at this early stage. Write and place inexpensive ads in various publications. Some won't do very well but you will soon learn which do, and why, if you keep decent records. Study, but don't copy those who are successful at what you would like to do. There's no magic formula or secret product that an inexperienced beginner can follow to become an overnight millionaire. You need a desirable product, a receptive market for that product, means to reach that market and a good sales strategy when you get there. You must acquire basic sales and communication skills, have determination and patience, and you must work hard. The objective is to showcase your products to qualified prospective buyers. Your challenge: to convert prospective buyers into receptive repeat customers!

We can help with ideas, opinions, suggested sources, explanations and answers to your questions, as can many of our members. We can also help spread the word within the mail order community about what you do, offer and want. The objective is to buy at the same or lower price, offer the same or better quality and make your products sound more appealing than the competition. To buy industry quality at the same or a better price you must locate and deal with legitimate trade suppliers. These rarely advertise in national publications that cater to opportunity seekers! Learn about pricing and quality. Shop around. Order samples. To make your offers sound appealing you may need the assistance of a trained copy writer and/or ad designer.

When in business for yourself, there's no boss to pat you on the head when you "done well". When you "do wrong" it can be much worse than just being yelled at. How does your boss know when to praise or scold you? Because he/she knows the subject and does his/her homework! When you are on your own, you take the rap for the poor work and bad decisions. You also build YOUR future and get ALL the credit and profit when it's done right!

The Mail Order business can be extremely rewarding. Work from home doing what you like to do at your own pace. You control your workload, investment and progression. You enjoy freedom and personal satisfaction that employees can only dream of. To a large extent you also control your cash flow and income. There is a price, you must be a responsible self-starter and be willing to work as long and as hard as takes to make your business a success. Those who have become successful in mail order will tell you without hesitation "**IT'S WORTH IT!**"

Good Luck in YOUR MAIL ORDER BUSINESS!