

# PRIVATE DUTY INSIDER

THE ULTIMATE MARKET INTELLIGENCE FOR NON-MEDICARE HOME CARE PROVIDERS



**Expert Advisor**

## How to craft and deliver direct mail that will generate referrals

By: Merrily Orsini

To achieve a direct mail campaign that will yield inquiries and sales, include information that's helpful to either the potential client or referral source, such as articles that relate to solutions for care like new drugs for Alzheimer's, innovative technology that reduces emergency room visits and success stories about home care.

Matching wants and needs is crucial to your success with direct mail marketing. Referral sources and potential clients have a need for information, and you can be a resource by sending information that is helpful to them. For example, create useful tools for clients' use, such as safety checklists, disaster preparedness lists, home delivered services lists, even lists of options for care with checklists outlining what is appropriate. [For a copy of corecubed's "Home safety checklist," see this issue's Tool of the Month.]

Also, send articles that you write and are published if they are informative and helpful.

When done correctly, non-traditional direct mail is an excellent tool that can generate new leads, convert existing leads into clients and increase sales from current referral sources.

As a means for obtaining private duty clients, direct mail has traditionally been thought of as the least effective way to get the attention of those needing care. The reason is that the concept and image of using direct mail for marketing is a large quantity mass mailing that is targeted to a list generated by geography, demographics or lifestyle. Since private duty home care clients can be anywhere, of any age and only have the need for care when that need occurs, there may be no interest to read that direct mail piece until that need for care is identified.

The key to a successful direct mail campaign is the proposition or offer. Normally, direct mailers *motivate* an audience to take action by responding to the mailer. But with resource-rich direct mail, you're

building *motivation that when a need arises* clients and referral sources will think of you as a resource for care.

And because direct mail is measurable and testable, it's more effective than other marketing tactics. You can measure the performance of each mailing simply by counting the number of increased referrals from the list that was targeted.

So what is considered a "successful campaign rate?" It depends on your list, other marketing efforts and your offer. In traditional direct mail, you would expect a 1%–3% return as a good rate of return, and with non-traditional direct mail to referral sources you should expect a higher rate. But those results will not necessarily show up immediately after the mail piece is sent. It will be more long term as the referral base grows.

Promoting your service to the right audience at the right time can be what differentiates you from your competitor and puts you ahead of the game. The following guidelines will help you create and properly target a non-traditional direct mail campaign.

### First, identify your target audience

Target your direct mail campaign to the following recipients:

1. **Potential referral sources.** Invest most of your time and resources into finding this valuable audience. Compile a complete list of potential referral sources, and add to it after every senior fair, hospital open house, trust and estate attorney luncheon or workshop, retirement financial planning dinner, church event and other events where your or your staff meet potential referral sources.
2. **Existing referral sources.**
3. **Potential client phone or Web inquiry calls that did not result in a sale.** It is vital to get the addresses and follow up with all inquiry calls so that you stay at the top of their minds. Be sure your Web site has a way to capture client contact information.

Targeting inquiries who have already found you once means that you have identified that they are interested. Keeping your name out in front of them as a resource simply means that you have a greater

chance they will think of your company when a need arises again or when they are unhappy with another provider.

### Timing is everything when sending mailings

Response to mailings is affected by holidays, current events and seasons. Your timing on topics as well as when to send is crucial.

Mail something helpful to all referral sources at least monthly. Follow up with inquiries after two weeks and then monthly thereafter.

**Tip:** Use holidays to give “stress less” tips.

**Tip:** Use special events as a springboard to create helpful hints that catch people’s attention. For example, during the Super Bowl season, add this “helpful hint” to your marketing mailer: “Purchase a TV earphone listening device for the hard of hearing so the entire room doesn’t have to listen to the blasting football games.”

### Stand out from all other mail

This is the opportunity for creative copy that focuses on how you can make the potential clients’ or referral sources’ lives better if they use your service. You need to think of stimulating emotions that evoke a positive response. You need to compel the recipients to trust your company and services.

Keep in mind that “less is more” in direct mail, and whatever is the focus of the piece – safety, a product – should be beneficial.

For example, if the focus of the piece is an emergency response unit, stress “the peace of mind for times when you are not there,” or “worrying about a long distance relative living alone? Worry no more with XXX system;” or “Mom, now I *can be* two places at once.”

Always repeat the key messages that you have selected to differentiate your company, such as “safety, security, peace of mind.” And be sure to include data, statistics, research, case studies or testimonials to back up your claims.

**Tip: Keep “branding” in mind.** Consider using a professional designer to help you create a design and layout that’s visually appealing.

Finally, when figuring costs for this non-traditional direct mail campaign, the actual cost of the mailing is only one piece. There is time/cost for strategy and planning to decide best topics; research time for finding the right article to send; reprint costs if applicable; writing time/cost of an idea that is turned into a tip sheet or checklist; copying or printing charges; database maintenance; fulfillment; and postage. ♦

### About the author:

*Merrily Orsini, a former private duty agency owner, is now the managing director of corecubed ([www.corecubed.com](http://www.corecubed.com)), an integrated marketing communications company. During her 18 years in private duty, Orsini grew her own business to 250 employees and more than \$5 million in revenue.*

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