

# HOW TO

## Use Personalized Cartoon Postcards to Stand Out and Grow Your Business

Put the same techniques used by some of the biggest direct marketers in the world to work for your business -- and start producing your own record-breaking response rates NOW!



by David Pham

Presented by

NextLevelGroup



# Table of Contents

You may scroll through the pages manually or click a link below to go directly to a particular section

Why use cartoons?.....	Page 4
An amazing history.....	Page 5
Three winning strategies.....	Page 6
1. Trickle/Awareness campaign.....	Page 7
2. Contact/Appointment generation.....	Page 8
3. Coupon redemption.....	Page 9
How to choose a cartoon.....	Page 10
How to use personalization.....	Page 11
Your testing strategy.....	Page 12
How to buy from Premium Postcard.....	Page 13

## 100% Response Rate

Ticor Title Insurance used this card to produce a 100% response to their appointment generation campaign -- 1,200 cards were mailed to top prospects and all 1,200 agreed to an appointment with their sales rep.



# Why use cartoons?

---

When I first suggest to clients that they use a personalized cartoon to spearhead their campaign, I sometimes feel silly for doing so. But not for long.

There is actually a very strong body of research that says cartoons are perhaps some of the most evocative images you could put on paper. Editorial readership surveys conducted by newspapers and magazines always show cartoons to be the best-read and best-remembered part of the publications. And that's saying a lot, because magazines are collective works; everything in them is intended to be worthy of attention and memorable.

It seems people -- across virtually all demographic and psychographic groupings -- are drawn to cartoons in a very powerful way. And that can pay big dividends in your own campaigns.

Consider, for example, what happens when one of our personalized cartoon postcards arrives in the daily stack of mail. The cartoon makes the piece immediately stand out from the rest. And once the recipient discovers the cartoon is personalized (assuming it is properly targeted, see p. 10), the postcard becomes a keepsake and often ends up on refrigerator doors or office walls, depending on where it was received. They often stay there for months.

Why should you care if your postcards are treated as keepsakes? I'm probably a lot like you; I receive a lot of mail every day. Much of what I receive are postcards and most of those barely register as they find their way immediately to the waste basket. I can't remember what postcards I received today. But many recipients remember our clients' personalized cartoon postcards for years. Now, if your offer and contact information are tied to that keepsake, don't you think you're bound to pull a better return on your investment than if your piece goes directly into the wastebasket? Of course it will.

A lot of promotional mail gets screened away before the intended recipient ever sees it. But here again, the personalized cartoons are the perfect counterbalance to a common problem all marketers face. As you can imagine, secretaries never throw away cartoons about the boss. We've heard countless stories of secretaries walking in and announcing our mailings. Has that been happening with your mailings?

When you use our postcard system through Amazing Mail, you'll be taking advantage of a proven response generator with 25 years and millions of dollars worth of testing behind it. That's a lot of trial and error paid for by someone else -- and a great deal more effectiveness than you can expect to produce on your own.

So, why use cartoons in your direct mail campaigns? Because they're one of the most powerful and cost-effective marketing tools available to help you maximize your R.O.I. I can't imagine a better reason than that.

# An amazing history

It's easy to miss the subtleties when you read that we've had a long track record of record-breaking success and that some of the biggest direct marketers in the world have paid millions of dollars test -- and help us perfect the use of personalized cartoons as response engines.

When we test new campaigns for large direct marketers, we're competing against their most effective package to date. To beat the control for *Forbes Magazine*, for example, is about as easy as getting nominated for an Oscar. And we not only beat their control, but our own package remained on top for another two years. That's like winning an Oscar six years in a row.

So now, imagine doing that over and over, in many different industries, each with their own nuances and obstacles to succeeding and breaking records. That's what you'll be tapping into with your own postcard campaigns through the Amazing Mail personalized cartoon collection by CartoonLink.

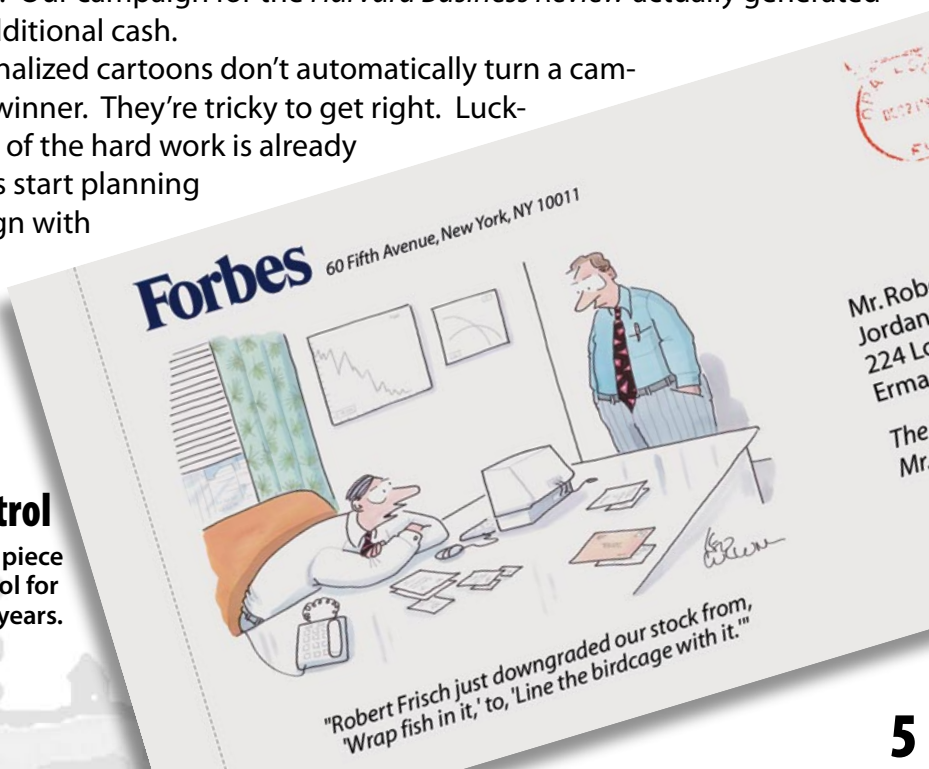
Of course, there's till a lot more to the story... When AT&T tested our personalized cartoon creative for their ProWATS product, it brought more response than they'd ever received before. When Ticor Title Insurance tested a personalized cartoon card as an appointment-generation campaign, their reps reported an impossible 100% response -- of the 1,200 top prospects mailed, all 1,200 agreed to an appointment.

Many of our large clients are magazine publishers. We've had winning campaigns for a long list of top titles, including *The New Yorker*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Ad Age*, *People Weekly*, *Outdoor Life*, *Small Business Reports*, *Sales & Marketing Management*. Our campaign for the *Harvard Business Review* actually generated \$70,000 in additional cash.

Personalized cartoons don't automatically turn a campaign into a winner. They're tricky to get right. Luckily for you, all of the hard work is already done. So let's start planning your campaign with a discussion of various strategies on the following pages.

## Forbes Control

This snap-pack piece served as control for Forbes for two years.



# Three winning strategies

---

There are many ways to approach a campaign, but those choices narrow based on parameters: What are you trying to accomplish? What do you want the audience to do as a result of receiving your campaign? What can you afford to spend?

Given the fact that you've chosen to use a postcard format for your campaign, you'll need to recognize which missions are the best fit for you and your company. For instance, you're not going to be able to request cash payments unless you direct recipients to a Web form. You won't be able to enclose multiple elements. There won't be any surprises as to what's inside your piece.

But these are also strengths. There's no worry about whether or not a recipient will open the piece, because it's already open. A postcard's instantaneous delivery of information confers the promise that you won't waste the prospect's time. I think the strongest advantage a postcard brings to your campaign is their simplicity -- they're very easy to handle and keep.

So you'll need to use a strategy that keeps your message short, but compels your audience to act. Sometimes, that desired action is simply to keep you in mind when they need the sort of services or products you offer, precisely when they're needed. You wouldn't expect someone to suddenly decide to list their home for sale because they received your postcard. In that case, you'll want to adopt a constant "trickle" or awareness campaign strategy (page 7).

Personalized cartoon postcards are particularly good at breaking through the clutter of daily mail and creating a memorable impression. If you're looking for a way to break through to important prospects to set sales appointments, take a look at page 8, where we'll explore contact and appointment-generation campaign strategies.

Do you offer a service or product in a market that is price-sensitive? If you have already found that coupon offers work for your business, consider a strategy based on making your personalized cartoon postcards double as coupons (page 9). The combination of sticking to refrigerator doors for months with a valuable coupon offer has already produced extremely strong results.

Personalized cartoons are not a panacea; they will not fix a strategy that isn't already sound. You should not plan to mail a one-time campaign and expect to see a flood of results, unless you're prepared to follow up on the phone, as in a contact campaign. Additionally, there are strategies to consider when choosing the right cartoons for your campaign and using personalization effectively. But first things first. Let's examine the Trickle/Awareness, Contact/Appointment-generation and Coupon Redemption campaign strategies in a bit more detail on the following pages.

# 1. Trickle/Awareness campaign strategy

Most businesses experience market cycles, while for others, there's no pattern to when customers will need the services and products they offer. Many marketers make what I consider a big mistake, when they attempt to force the market to comply with their wishes by sending a big mailing to promote a one-time sale. It doesn't work.

What does work is establishing an on-going relationship with your customer base, so you get the call first when they need the goods and services you offer. Top-of-mind awareness is critical to the success of all businesses, but particularly for smaller businesses that sometimes have to compete with big national brands.

Real estate agents, for example, know that they can't expect to send a single promotion and convince someone right then and there to sell their home, no matter what sort of free gift or discount on commission is offered. That would be foolish. Successful agents know that their business grows as a result of building awareness and a sense of relationship over time, so that when someone decides to buy or sell a home, they're the first to get the call.

The fact is, essentially all businesses can benefit from creating dominant awareness among their prospects and customers. And a personalized cartoon postcard can be your secret weapon.

A trickle campaign strategy requires a commitment. You'll need to set up no less than a monthly schedule of mailings and stick with it. Because your audience will come to expect and look forward to receiving their monthly cartoon postcard. Which is a very good thing, because it means they're engaged in your message and with your business.

With each postcard, you'll be building another layer of awareness and commitment to you and your business among your customers and prospects. Use your monthly mailings as a platform to tell more and more of your story, so your audience thoroughly understands what you offer and why they want to do business with you. Do that and you'll get the call every time.

## Success story

Florida commercial roofer Best Roofing uses monthly postcards to build powerful top-of-mind awareness among prospects and customers. This strategy works because customers never know when they'll need roofing services, but whenever the need arises, Best Roofing always gets the call.



## 2. Contact/Appointment-generation strategy

If your business depends on putting sales reps in front of a steady stream of qualified prospects, you're going to want to institute a contact campaign strategy to generate those appointments. Fortunately, our personalized cartoons come with a rich history of generating both contact at the highest levels and extraordinarily high response rates to appointment generation campaigns.

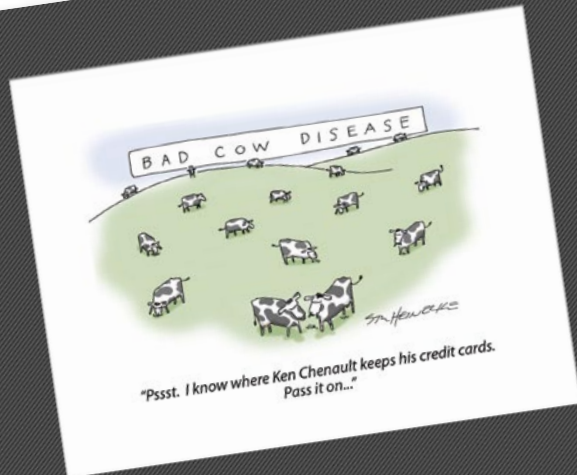
We've used personalized cartoons to reach some of the most inaccessible people in the world, including Presidents, Prime Ministers, celebrities and CEOs. In this mission, they're nothing short of a secret weapon. We routinely experience 80% or better response rates. But only if the campaign is run properly.

Contact campaigns differ from traditional direct response in a number of ways, but the most important distinction is that your follow-up becomes the response device. This is not a fire-and-forget proposition. You must follow up with each and every prospect, so you'll need to be prepared with some sort of telemarketing solution to achieve proper response rates.

Contact campaigns can often take some pretty exotic forms as well. We've used everything from framed prints in custom packaging to giant foam core postcards to exotic cardboard envelopes. I've even used a bar napkin with a quickly drawn cartoon delivered by waiter to meet, among others, California Governor Pete Wilson and actor Danny Aiello.

For your appointment-generation campaign, I recommend using our personalized cartoon postcards. Although we've used much more expensive formats, experience has shown that the postcards are the most cost-effective way to stand out to your most important prospects -- as well as to their assistants, who often affect your access and eventual success (remember, secretaries don't throw away cartoons about their bosses).

If you're planning to use this strategy, make sure you match mail quantities with your call capacity. It's best to mail 1,000 postcards a month than it is to mail 12,000 and not keep up.



### Success story

At one point, I needed to reach the person who handles points programs for American Express. So I sent this print to CEO Ken Chenault, along with a letter asking for a referral to the right contact. His assistant recognized me immediately from the print and passed along a very powerful referral to the proper contact -- from the company's CEO.



### 3. Coupon-redemption strategy

I know this story appears below, but it bears repeating and a bit more explanation, because it illustrates the power of a coupon redemption strategy.

When Standard Parking used one of our personalized postcards to re-activate past customers of its off-airport parking facility near LAX, they got a lot more than they bargained for. The postcard doubled as a coupon; recipients were told to present the card the next time they travelled to receive a free 24 hour stay. Within the first 30 days the postcard produced more response than Standard Parking had ever received from any prior campaign -- and that included television, radio, print and direct mail.

But that wasn't the end of the story -- the campaign continued to produce redemptions for another year and a half!

I often point to this story when I explain how powerful it is to have your postcard land on office walls or refrigerator doors. Obviously, for someone to pull this card out up to a year and a half later and still be sufficiently aware of the facility and the offer to use it is extraordinary. I'm sure you received at least one postcard in the mail yesterday. Can you remember whom it was from and what they were offering?

It is an amazing testament to the power of top-of-mind awareness. But the story also points out the effectiveness of the brilliantly simple strategy of turning the postcard into a coupon. Now the postcard is not only a keepsake, but something of monetary value.

By requiring presentation of the postcard to receive a discount or some other special offer, you're building in a level of interactivity that keeps your customers engaged. It also gives you a direct look into the effectiveness of your campaign, because you can track redemptions.

The coupon-redemption strategy is an excellent way to test offers, timing and other factors to zoom in on what works best for your business. That's what the big direct marketers do.

And now you can, too.

#### Success story

Standard Parking used our personalized cartoon postcards to deliver a free 24 hour stay coupon for their off-airport parking facility near LAX. The postcard generated record response in the first 30 days, then continued to generate a constant stream of redemptions -- and new business -- for the ensuing year and a half.



# How to choose a cartoon

Whenever I start a campaign with a new client, I go through the same conversation every time. Most new clients misunderstand the purpose of the cartoon in the campaign, so they immediately jump to, "How do we make the cartoon explain who we are or what we're offering?" In other words, how do we make the cartoon be about us?

So you need to understand that, in order for the personalized cartoons to work their magic, they must be focused solely on the recipient, not on you, your company or your offer.

You'll need to think of the cartoon not as a branding element, but as a device to create a common point of agreement about a need you want to fulfill for the prospect. All humor reveals truth and all cartoons have a central message. "Life is tough." "There's no such thing as friendly competition." "You're smarter than most people." "You deserve to succeed." These are points of agreement on which you can build a theme in your sales message.

Based on these criteria, you'll find yourself choosing entirely different cartoons than you might have expected. Sports themes are particularly effective at pointing out what it takes to win in business. So a football cartoon might be an excellent choice for a campaign about banking, even though they would appear to have nothing to do with each other.

We tested a campaign for *Outdoor Life* magazine some years ago, which yielded very interesting results. The cartoon showed two fishermen on a dock, one holding an enormous bass in his arms, the other commenting, "That looks like the one Joe Smith threw back." The campaign nearly doubled the response of the previous control, even though the cartoon never mentioned the name of the magazine or anything about the offer. If it had, the campaign would have failed. But because the cartoon memorialized and focused solely on each recipient's love of fishing, the campaign flourished.

Choose cartoons from the Amazing Mail gallery that speak to the needs, feelings and issues in your audience members' lives. Show them you understand and are ready to provide solutions. And they will respond.



## Establish a theme

This cartoon demonstrates why there is no such thing as 'friendly competition' in business. If your service or product helps other businesses succeed by being more competitive, this would be an excellent cartoon choice for your campaign. Note that the cartoon says nothing about your or your service -- it doesn't need to. It shows that you understand the needs of the prospect and are ready to provide solutions.

# How to use personalization

When personalization first became available to direct marketers, they didn't know what to do with it. So they overdid it.

"Dear Mrs. Smith" ... "And you know, Mrs. Smith" ... "And what would you expect to pay, Mrs. Smith?" ... "And don't forget, Mrs. Smith" ... "But wait, Mrs. Smith, there's more..." Enough! Obviously, you would never speak to someone like this in person. You need to think about how you can make your use of personalization rational and conversational. So that it adds to the effect you're trying to achieve.

That is particularly true in the captions of the personalized cartoons. What the captions say is already locked in -- they're carefully written gags that conform with the rules we've learned through our 25 years worth of testing.

So, why am I telling you this?

Two reasons. I know it's tempting to want to write your own captions and you may be wondering why it's not allowed in our system. I believe a big part of the value you should get as a postcard mailer and our customer is the benefit of our expertise and test experience. After all, you're buying a highly tested marketing product with a long history of successful campaign outcomes. So we have a lot to live up to.

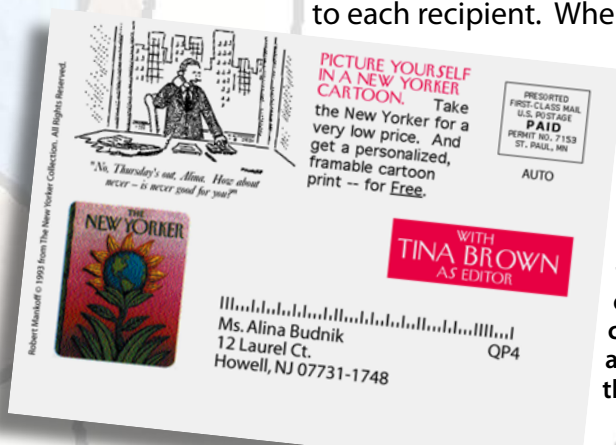
Second, there is a very easy way to defeat the campaign by inserting your name or any name other than the recipients' in the captions (a client's, perhaps?) And I want to make sure you clearly understand that sending a cartoon about yourself to several thousand people is not going to do much to help your business stand out. At least not in a good way.

There is one aspect of personalization on your postcard that is under your creative control. And it's an important one to remember. Our testing has shown that recipients pay more attention to something addressed specifically to them. So instead of, "Dear Friend" or something similar, I recommend that you always start your message copy with a personalized salutation. Use either "Dear <Firstname>," or "<Firstname> --" and you'll immediately score points.

Even though this doesn't qualify as personalization, I think it's also important to include your signature, as though you're writing a personal note to each recipient. When planning your use of personalization in your campaign, keep in mind that people like to be talked to, but not talked at.

## New Yorker control

What better use of personalization for this subscription offer than to picture each recipient in an actual New Yorker cartoon? No mention of offer here -- just a carefully planned use of personalization that set a new record for the magazine.



# Your testing strategy

Testing is the cornerstone of entire direct marketing movement. If you don't test, it's like taxiing onto the runway, shutting your eyes, then hitting the throttle. Direct marketing has always had an advantage broadcast media can never match. Since you know precisely how many pieces you've mailed, it is possible to get an extremely accurate picture of what's working and what's not. Testing and adjusting your methods is how you'll transform a successful business into an even more successful one.

**Establish a test matrix:** In order to get an accurate read on how your campaign is working, you need to divide it into test cells. Mail to each cell simultaneously, keep test cell sizes uniform and strive to eliminate any possible bias that can distort results. Once you have a baseline "control" (the most effective combination of creative, list source and offer), continue to peel off small test cells in subsequent mailings to push the envelope on your results.

**Establish a tracking mechanism:** This is sometimes a challenge, particularly if there is no standardized response method, such as a specific Web page or toll-free number unique to each test cell.

**For Trickle/Awareness campaigns:** This is the toughest type of campaign to track, due to the lack of a uniformly used response channel. Setting up a well-disciplined reporting system among your sales, customer service or any other members of your staff who come in contact with the public is crucial. Develop a standardized form containing five questions everyone is required to ask, record and report.

**For Contact/Appointment-generation campaigns:** This form of campaign is much easier to track, because your staff are the ones initiating the response. Again a disciplined reporting system like the one described above is crucial. If you use a telemarketing company, they're already tracking results.

**For Coupon redemption campaigns:** This one's simple. Tally up the coupons redeemed to get a clear picture of results. One possible hitch: you may find recipients are unwilling to hand their cartoon back to you. In that case, mark the piece as having been used, and record the response.



# How to buy from Premium Postcard

To set up a personalized cartoon order, of course, you'll need to visit [www.premiumpostcard.com](http://www.premiumpostcard.com). From the main page, you'll have several options -- either to visit the cartoon galleries directly or log in first.

**Have you set up an account yet?** If not, go ahead and set one up. It will be necessary to have an account set up before purchasing anything or viewing much of the site. Once you set up an account, ordering will be a very simple process, and the system will help you track prior purchases so you can simply go back and order a favorite with just a few clicks.

**Visit the personalized cartoon galleries:** You can order personalized cartoon postcards in all three sizes offered by Premium Postcard; the classic USPS postcard size of 4.25" x 6" and two jumbo formats, 5.5" x 8.5" and 5.5" x 11.5". You'll find the cartoon collection in corporate gallery, or you can get there by following the order process.

**Request a free sample:** When you sign up for your account, Premium Postcard will send you a free sample of your choice. So once you sign up, be sure to request a sample personalized cartoon postcard.

**Upload your own list or rent one from InfoUSA:** As you move through the process of setting up a mailing, you'll be given an opportunity to either upload a list you already have or rent a list from InfoUSA right on the spot. This is an exceptionally useful tool, which allows you to target a radius around your location, by Zip Code and by dwelling or business type.

**Order one card or thousands:** That's what's amazing about Premium Postcard's system. You can order one card or thousands and they'll all get out into the mail stream within 24 hours.

**All inclusive, totally turnkey:** You pay one price and everything is done for you. Lists are CASS certified (required by the USPS for presorted mail), sorted for quicker delivery and mailed. No separate fees for postcards and postage; it's all included.

**So what are you waiting for? Let's get started!**

## The power of awareness

This was one of four waves mailed to pharmacists on behalf of a new generic asthmatic drug product, Metaprel. Each wave promised a series of four free cartoon prints as the pharmacists requested each installment of information on the product. The result was a 56% overall response rate -- and the doubling of sales of the product over a one year period, all from pharmacists recommending the drug to their clients as a less expensive alternative.