

Secrets of Creating a Winning Magalog

By Krista Jones

There are several ways to format a direct-mail piece. Sales letters, postcards, faux newsletters, and special reports are just a few of the more familiar formats we regularly receive in our mailbox. And then there's the magalog — a very different type of direct-mail piece that has its own rules.

I asked two experts on magalogs, Lori Haller, a 20-year freelance graphic design veteran, and Don Mahoney to give us some tips on how to put one together.

Let's start by describing exactly what a magalog is and how it works.

A magalog is a four-color sales promotion that looks like a magazine. Unlike conventional sales letters, the lead of a magalog doesn't always immediately follow the headline or salutation. Instead, it might be spread out over a couple of pages, with sidebars and other eye-catching features on the outside or inside covers.

Why would you deliberately divert attention away from the part of the sales message that is supposed to hook the reader? Because, unlike sales letters, magalogs aren't meant to be read from beginning to end. They're designed for scanning ... like a magazine.

So, when you write a magalog, consider putting a sidebar right upfront. The sidebar might summarize the central theme and lead. This will help "scanners" get a good idea of what the piece is about.

You can help scanners even more by keeping the copy short and snappy. Prospects don't want to see a "wall of copy" when they're flipping through the pages of a magalog.

And here's another major difference between magalogs and sales letters ...

Magalogs don't provide a continuous stream of information. After the lead, they are generally written so that the prospect could read ANY page and still have a good idea of what is going on. In other words, every page gives them enough information to make them want to buy.

When you're writing a magalog, decide what you want your prospect to see first, second, third, and so on. Then find ways to direct his eye to those things in that order. How? By using subheads, pull quotes, sidebars, bold type, underlining, etc. to make them stand out

The bottom line is this: Nothing about the copy or layout of a magalog should be haphazard. As with all copy, think about what you want to say and when you want to say it. For instance, if you've got premiums to offer, figure out the best place to introduce them. You might want to announce them right away or wait until the close. Or, if a premium supports an idea you're conveying in the copy, it might be best to introduce it there so the reader can immediately see its value. The key is to maintain momentum

in pushing the prospect toward the close.

Now let's [take a look](#) at a sample written and designed by the pros.

You'll see an actual magalog for a stock market newsletter, with every major area of the promo analyzed by a marketing expert from the AWAI "Monthly Marketing Genius" program. Click on the numbered circles and you can see specific comments point by point. (You can keep clicking "next" on the bottom of each page to see additional pages of the Magalog). This particular magalog has brought in well over \$5 million in sales to date.

Study this successful magalog, keep the tips we provided above in mind, and when you get a job that might call for a magalog format, you'll be ready to work on it like the experts.

[Monthly Copywriting Genius is a service that uncovers the secrets behind the strongest direct response promotions in the mail, in space advertising, and on the Internet today. Each month, expert marketers analyze winning promotions for products that have been successfully sold through direct marketing. Plus, through comments written directly on the promo and an in-depth interview with the copywriter, you can learn exactly how and why the writer did what he did to produce his blockbuster control. Find out more about [Monthly Copywriting Genius](#).]

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American Writers & Artists Institute

220 George Bush Blvd, Suite D

Delray Beach, FL 33444

(561) 278-5557 or (866) 879-2924