

HOW TO START YOUR OWN MAIL ORDER PUBLICATION

If you are an old hand at mail order, or a newcomer to the business, sooner or later you are going to want to try your luck at having your own publication.

There are some pro's and con's to running your own publication.

The good points:

Prestige - You are the Editor and Publisher.

You can get free advertising for your products.

You can earn profits on the publication.

You can get a name in the mail order field.

You can write articles and editorial opinions.

Some of the con's:

You have to be careful in selecting a format. Too many people spend all their money trying to start a publication and don't plan far enough ahead to keep it going.

It takes time - doing layouts, collecting material to use, pasting up ads. You will learn more about tricks of the trade in this report.

So, if the scale of interest tips toward your desire to give it a try, be prepared to put some time and dollars into getting it off the ground.

Your best format, and the cheapest, is to use an 8-1/2 x 11 standard letter size sheet. Fold it in half, making a folder of 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 size. You now have what is termed as a 4-pager publication. An 8-pager would be using a second sheet, folded to the 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 size and placed inside of the first sheet.

Then after you have your publication launched, you will make things easier by having some layout sheets printed in non-reproducing blue ink. The layout sheets are divided into two columns per page, and into column inches. There are sixteen 1-inch spaces per page (eight per column). This is the starting

point in determining the cost and selling price per column inch for ads.

Take a layout to your local quickie printer, and get a price for 1,000 copies of your 8-1/2 x 11 sheet, printed two sides.

For an example, let's assume your printer wants \$20.00 for 1,000.

On a four page publication, you reserve the front page for your masthead (name of the publication) and three pages for advertising.

You have 16 one-inch spaces per page times three pages, so you have 48 spaces available to sell. If you sell each space at \$5.00 net to you, you will generate 48 x \$5.00 or \$240.00 in revenue for one sheet folded into a four pager.

Remember, if you use an eight pager, you are generating \$80.00 per page from advertising, so every ad of your own (or articles that use up ad space) reduces your income. An eight pager, less the front page, generates 7 pages of advertising revenue, or \$560.00. Your cost for an eight pager for printing would be approximately \$40.00 for 1,000 quantity, leaving you a profit of \$520.00.

Start by putting together a layout - a four pager. Select a name that tells it all, in one or two words if possible, i.e. "The Mail Box." Decide how often you are going to publish - once a month - bi-monthly - quarterly. Write your editorial copy for the front page; a typewriter is all you need. Type your copy on separate sheets in two columns and paste it up. Tell all about your publication... what, where, when, who, etc., and be sure to tell the circulation you will have - 1,000, 2,000, etc. The more circulation you have, the more you can ask per inch. When you are first starting out, with only 1,000 circulation, you may not be able to get \$5.00 per column inch. It may be necessary to charge only \$2.50 per inch to get advertisers to buy your space.

Your next step is to paste up some ads. If you have products that you sell by mail order, use them to fill the pages. You may also write to some who are advertising in other publications and offer them an introductory ad at a reduced rate for the first issue. The back page should be reserved for your advertising order blank, calling attention to the special price, and inviting potential advertisers to complete it and mail it in with payment.

When pasting up ads, make sure to keep them in a neat column width. And if someone submits an ad on colored paper, dip it in household bleach and place it on paper towel to dry. The bleach will take out the color background so that your printer can

handle the reproduction.

Co-Publishing

Most publications in mail order are co-publications. This means that if you are the prime publisher, you insert a box on the front page with "Co-Publisher" printed above it. Co-publishers are your advertisers. Each may run an ad in your publication one time, paying the full rate, and agreeing to mail 25, 50, or more copies with his name stamped in the Co-publisher publication. The prime publisher does not solicit ads directly, but refers all ads through a Co-publisher. The Co-publisher sells ads by mailing out copies. If you establish a rate of \$6.00 per 1-inch ad, your Co-publisher keeps 50% and sends the ad to be run, along with your 50%, to you.

This is a method of distributing your publication without having to mail it yourself. However, experience has proven that only about 40% actually mail their copies, so your publication may not get distributed and results would then be very discouraging to you and the advertisers, (even though they did not do what they agreed to do).

The best idea is to get your hands on many other publications as possible. Type up labels with all advertisers, and prepare your own mailing list; you may wish to supplement this with a list of mail order buyers that can be purchased from list houses for \$30 to \$35 per 1,000.

Inquire at your local post office for information/instruction on bulk mailing. Current ruling is a minimum of 200 pieces, and if you get up to 2,000, you really should consider bulk mailing. You will find that a permit is necessary, which involves a fee, but bulk will cut your cost tremendously. You do have to sort and tie your mail by zip codes, but the savings per piece is quite substantial. compared to first class.

To improve your professional touches, learn more about graphics by purchasing books on graphics, layouts and techniques available from many sources - or go to your public library. You will learn about reproducing photos, reducing, enlarging, using press-on type for headlines. These are all elements you will learn quickly when you put out your own publication. If you have a local printer, you might be surprised to find he is willing to help you by sharing information and shortcut tips. Also, study other publications for style and format, and make notes as to how you could improve them.

When you have progressed to a circulation to 5,000 or more, you should look into a changeover to tabloid format (newspaper

style) which is printed on Webb press - the savings are tremendous. But for starters, stay with the 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 format.