A lot of people open their mail right in front of the recycle bin these days. I know I do. After a half second glance, I'm throwing 90% of it away without another thought.

If most people are going to throw your postcard away, then why did we even bother to write this article? Simple. Even in the age of landing pages and Facebook pixel marketing, postcards are still one of the best ways to target a geographic area you want to dominate.

If you follow our advice your leads might not throw your postcards in the trash. They'll keep them and call you and you'll close more deals. You'll definitely want to get your postcards from a company that specializes in realtors, such as ProspectsPLUS! Click here to start customizing one of their real estate postcard templates.

Let's get started. Here's a brief overview of what we'll cover:

- Why Real Estate Postcards Work
- How to Keep Your Postcards Out of the Trash
- How Much Do Real Estate Postcards Cost?
- Different Types of Postcards for Different Audiences
- Postcard Design Choices
- How Frequently Should You Send Postcards?
- How To Measure Results

Why Real Estate Postcards Work

Many new agents may think that being "hyper local" is an industry fad like QR codes or 3D floorplans. In reality, it's a strategy that has been used by successful agents for decades. More than any other marketing technique, postcards allow you to target local areas with pinpoint accuracy. Here are a few more benefits of real estate postcards that you may not have thought of:

They Get Leads and Help Build Your Sphere of Influence

Real estate postcards plant a seed. Realistically, don't expect to receive a huge amount of traffic after your initial round of postcard mailing. Instead, consider it as an investment in your future. Postcards help you get a few leads in the short term, but where they really shine is in the long-term. The more a potential lead is exposed to your business, the more of a brand awareness you develop and the more likely they will be to reach out to you in the future.

They're Targeted

Like with facebook advertising, you can target your postcards to a specific demographic. Whether you use a mailing list you've personally curated, or one that you've purchased from a reputable service, you can target only the people who will most likely respond to your call-to-action.

Think of sending postcards as circle prospecting without the phone. The people who live in the neighborhood of your just listed or just sold house are the ones most likely to be curious about it. You can sate their curiosity, build your sphere of influence, and get more leads from one cheap postcard campaign. What's not to love?

They're Cheap

The average price to design, print, and mail small batches of real estate postcards is less than \$1 per card. For larger batches, you can get that number down below 50 cents per card or cheaper.

They Can Show off Your Marketing Chops

When you send real estate postcards with current listings, it communicates something even stronger. It shows potential sellers that you spend money on marketing. Why is this important? It conveys the message that all of your clients are treated to an aggressive marketing campaign, so the seller may feel more confident in choosing to work with you. Click here for more creative real estate marketing ideas.

Postcards are the epitome of a brief, punch message. Instead of sending a letter that your potential clients must open to read, your postcard is already opened. If your message is crafted properly, you can get them to read it, and possibly even keep the postcard.

How to Keep Your Postcards Out of the Trash

Like I mentioned before though, most people have very, very little patience for direct mail. You have at most a second or two of their attention before they decide to throw it in the trash or keep it. In this section, you'll learn how to craft your message and design your card so they don't wind up in the trash.

The First Rule: Always Ask W.I.I.F.M.

When they get a marketing message, people are generally only asking themselves one simple question; What's In It For Me? While this seems like an overly simplified concept, in reality it should be central to everything you do in sales. If you're only focusing on what's in it for YOU, chances are your marketing will fail.

This article is actually a great example of this concept. You saw the headline, clicked on it, read the first few paragraphs, and now you're reading this one. Why? What's in it for you? Maybe you're trying to kill time between appointments or are getting ready to launch a postcard campaign next week and need advice. You're here for a reason right? If you can figure out your audience's reason to read your postcard, you can capitalize on that and see great returns from your postcard campaign.

Here are a few reasons why your audience might read and keep your postcard:

- They're thinking of buying or selling their house soon This one should be obvious. If they're selling or buying soon, they may be actively looking for an agent, or are very interested in local sales.
- They have a friend, coworker, or loved one who is interested in buying or selling a house If there's one thing people love to, do it's offer (usually unsolicited) advice to their friends. If your message is compelling enough they may pass on your information.
- You're offering them something of value The offer is the king of answering WIIFM. While there are endless things you can offer your audience, here are a few of the most common:
 - Free Competitive Market Analysis While the price is right, I personally wouldn't focus my offer on a free CMA. First of all, every real estate agent for a hundred miles around has probably offered them one already. Secondly, with a little digging they could probably find most of this information out for themselves online.
 - Shorter sales contracts Now this is more like it. A big part of the reason homeowners are reluctant to sign with an agent are long sales contracts.
 Offering a one or two week contract with contingencies is a genuine value for homeowners.
 - Sales Guarantees- Offering a guarantee is another tangible value for your audience and a great reason to keep your card. Consider offering a cash reward if you can't sell their home in say, 60 days.
 - Coupons If you have a good relationship with a local business, see if you can work out a deal to offer your audience a discount. For example, if you are friendly with a contractor or handyman, you can offer a discount on their services. You get to offer value to your audience, they get free advertising.
 - Local calendars If designed and printed nicely, local calendars can also be fridge-worthy. You can offer high/low tide schedules, local sports teams schedules, farmer's market schedules etc.

- They're curious Never underestimate curiosity. They may not be selling or buying today or even this year, but they still want to know what houses are selling for because it affects their home's value. Maybe the house you're featuring on your postcard belonged to a friend or acquaintance.
- They LIKE your postcard Let's face it, no one is going to pin junk mail to their fridge or bulletin board, but what if you're not sending them junk mail? What if instead of a marketing message, the front of your postcard was just a pretty picture of local scenery with your logo on it? Even if they aren't very interested in the marketing message on the back of the card, they may still put it on the fridge. Now they look at your logo every day.

The Second Rule: K.I.S.S.

The second rule of thumb for keeping your postcard out of the the trash is to remember to K.I.S.S. Keep It Simple Silly. Whether you're thinking about what you want to say on your postcards, which listings to feature, or mulling over your layout, you need to keep one image in your mind: a person standing over a recycling bin sorting their mail. How much time do you think she's going spend deciding if she wants to keep your card? Maybe a second? Two?

Since you have so little time, you need to make your postcards as simple and easy to read as possible. If they can't decide what's in it for them in a second, it's going in the bin.

How Much Do Real Estate Postcards Cost?

Now that you're convinced of the effectiveness of real estate postcards, and how to create postcards that will get noticed, it's time to get into the nitty gritty. How much do they cost? As you may imagine, the cost varies. It depends on how much you choose to do on your own, and what service you use, if any. Let's take a look at the four main costs attributed to real estate postcards:

1. Cost of Mailing

For the traditional postcard (4" x 6"), the average cost of mailing ranges between .23¢ and .41¢ per postcard with a mailing service. If you use EDDM (Every Door Direct Mail) through the post office, expect to pay around 18 cents per unit.

If you've ever done an Internet search for postcard mailing companies, you know there's a lot to choose from, and the prices vary a lot. It's important to go with an established company that may seem more expensive upfront, but won't hit you with hidden fees.

For the sake of simplicity, ProspectsPLUS! is an excellent option to consider.

They offer two mailing services: first class mailing or standard (bulk) mailing. Choose first class mailing for time sensitive material, because this option is quicker. Your postcards will be delivered within 3-5 days. With ProspectsPLUS! the price per first-class mailing of a 4×6 postcard is .59¢ or less; for larger postcards the price can go up to .89¢ per piece.

Choose standard (bulk) mailing to save some pennies. It's more cost-effective, but definitely slower. The average delivery is between 10-14 days, so it's not good for event notification. Expect to pay .70¢-.80¢ with a 200 card minimum. The rates decrease as the quantity increases. Prospects Plus only offers standard mailing for jumbo (8.5"x5.5") postcards and larger.

What's included in a mailing service? Let's keep ProspectsPLUS! as an example.

- Onsite USPS verification
- CASS Certification for lowest postage rates
- 100# coated cover stock paper
- Full color printing front and back
- Protective UV coating on the front of card
- Tracking for 100% of your order
- Combining lists—up to three lists can be combined and processed at no additional charge. Each list after the third will incur a fee of \$15 per list.

Postal Rates Without a Mailing Company:

If you choose to send it yourself through the USPS, expect it to vary between .25 to .34¢ per postcard.

The price ranges on whether you're sending it to a wider distribution. Here's how it breaks down:

In order to get a first class commercial rate, you must send at least 500 cards. Otherwise, the charge is .34¢ each. When you send 500 cards, you have the option to send to a 5 digit zip code, at .25¢ for 500+ postcards. If you'd prefer to cast a wider net, and send to a 3 digit zip code area, expect to pay .26¢ for 500+ postcards.

For presorted postcards, the rate goes up to .29¢ each for a minimum of 500 postcards.

Be aware that USPS charges an annual mailing fee, which is around \$215 (as of 2016). You'll also need to apply for a mailing permit, but it's free of charge.

Still with me? I know it's a lot to take in, which is why it's probably easier to use a mailing service.

2. Cost of Printing

Often, printing costs are very reasonable, less than the cost of mail. However, the price can vary wildly. Depending on the volume and the company you choose, expect to pay a price between .05¢ and .17¢ per postcard.

Here are the approximate costs of mailing and printing a two-sided, full color postcard on laminated cover stock:

- 100 Postcards .68¢ each (.24¢ for printing; .34¢ for postage)
- 250 Postcards .53¢ each (.19¢ for printing; .34¢ for postage)
- 500 Postcards .52¢ each (.18¢ for printing; .34¢ for postage)

3. Cost of Design

When it comes to design, you have three choices-design your own postcard, use a template, or hire a design team. Charges range from \$0, if you do it yourself or choose a free template, or \$99 and up. Templates are often a popular option, because the design elements are set, and there's no surprises. You just submit your own images, message, and contact information. It's easy to do and probably the quickest option.

Here are a few options for pre-made templates:

- ProspectsPLUS! Postcard
- Modern Postcard
- ExpressCopy.com
- Vistaprint
- Graphic River

Hiring a Graphic Designer on the Cheap

Instead of buying templates, another option for great design on a budget is to use fiverr or 99designs. Both services let you hire great designers for very affordable rates. On fiverr you can hire someone to design a custom postcard for as little as \$5, and on 99designs you set up guidelines and several designers come up with mockups for your design. Once they're all in, you can choose the one you like best.

4. Cost of Buying a Mailing List

You can procure your own mailing list through your existing clients but, if you're launching a big campaign, you may not have enough people on your list. That's when it's time to turn to companies that specialize in list building. ProspectsPLUS! enables you to build a list based on geography (zip codes or neighborhoods), demographic characteristics (number and age of kids, estimated home value), or even behavioral attributes like how recently they last moved.

Expect to pay between .03¢ to .20¢ per record, depending on the quantity order. The more records you buy, the less it will cost per record. Here are a few other options for purchasing mailing lists.

- InfoUSA
- Directmail.com
- Experian
- Melissa Data

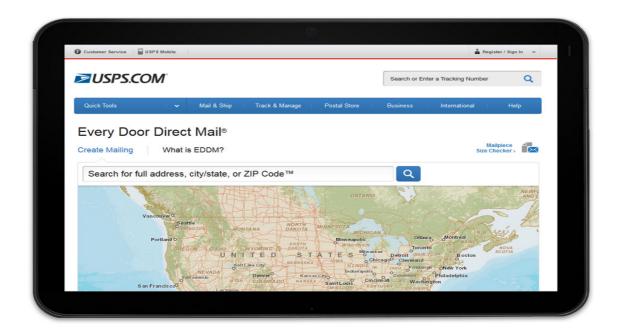
If you'd like to learn more about purchasing mailing lists, over at Entrepreneur.com Craig Simpson has a great primer on the subject. John Keating over at Marketing Donut offers some insider tips as well.

Nextmark has an amazing service called Mailing List Finder which lets you search up to 1400 mailing list providers offerings by keyword. Great place to start your research.

Try EDDM (Every Door Direct Mail) If You Are on a Budget

EDDM is an incredible service offered by the USPS that lets you send a postcard to every single home along a particular mail route for a little less than 18 cents per postcard. That means to reach 500 homes in your farm area, you'll pay a little less than \$100. If you double your spend, you can reach 1,000 homes, which may cover your entire farm, for less than \$200.

This is a great option for new agents who may not have a great list ready to go. Instead they can target specific neighborhoods they want to build their sphere in.



How EDDM Works

Considering it's run by the United States Postal Service, EDDM is actually pretty simple. All you need to do is design your postcard according to their guidelines, and have your direct mail company send them via EDDM, or set up EDDM yourself via the USPS website or at your local post office. The USPS will then deliver your postcard to every single home on the mail route you select, up to 5,000 postcards per day.

EDDM Cost vs ROI

Since you probably already see the value of expanding your sphere of influence in the area you're focusing on, let's talk about a real world ROI for a just sold EDDM campaign.

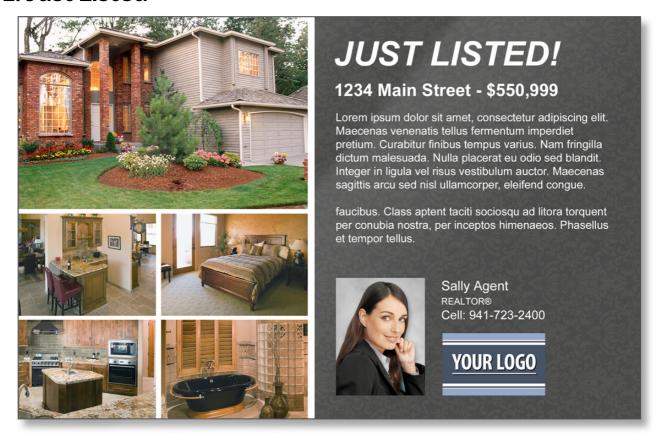
According to most studies, direct mail has a response rate of around 3-4%. That means that out of the 1,000 postcards you sent via EDDM, you should get somewhere around 40 responses. If you can get a listing or buyer client from just one of those responses, you'd have an ROI of over 1000%. Not too shabby.

If you're pressed for time, you can also have a printing company like ProspectsPLUS! handle the EDDM setup for you. They charge a setup fee of \$20 per carrier route as well as standard printing and EDDM postage rates. The only caveat is that they only offer this service for "Panoramic" sized postcards (11"x5.5") and up.

Different Postcards for Different Audiences

There are four main types of real estate postcards you should focus on in your marketing campaign. For each of these postcards, there will be a different audience. These are the four types of postcards:

1. Just Listed



Just Listed postcards showcase newly listed homes that may appeal to your buyer set. It can also positively affect sellers, who are curious about comparable homes in the area. Use the Just Listed postcard to advertise your best homes, and also as a way to introduce yourself to your target audience. Click here to customize your Just Listed postcard at ProspectsPLUS!

2. Just Sold



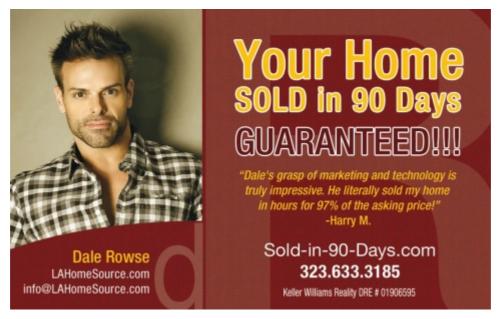
Just Sold postcards provide the much-valued social proof. If you've sold a property and share it with your target audience, they'll see that someone else trusted you to sell their home-and that you were successful. It's a huge selling point for you. Click here to customize your Just Listed postcard at ProspectsPLUS!

3. Combination Just Sold/Just Listed



Combining just listed and just sold is a great way to show off how busy you are in the neighborhood.

4. Prospecting



Prospecting postcards don't feature a home you've just sold or listed. Instead they focus on building your brand and finding leads with a direct pitch.

How Do You Design a Real Estate Postcard?

Design is always a very thorny topic for realtors. Everyone have different taste, and many realtors want to avoid looking slick or polished as they feel it turns people off. Some of the most successful realtors in the country have dated websites, clunky logos, and ugly branding. Yet they still make millions. I'm not naming names, but I'm sure you can think of a few.

My advice on graphic design is to focus on utility rather than aesthetics. That means making sure your design is readable, clean, and interesting enough that your audience will want to pick it up and read it. Think of billboards. They aren't Rembrandts, but they get your attention and deliver a message even when you're speeding down the freeway.

Keep the Design Consistent

Your postcard marketing isn't limited to one mailing campaign. You should at least have 5 rounds of mailings. So, with subsequent postcards, be careful to keep a similar design to your previous efforts. All of your different postcards should look like they belong in the same family. Use the same photo of yourself. Place the logo in the same spot. Use the same colors and layout. All of these factor into brand recognition.

Decide on Paper Type

You have four main options when it comes to postcard printing:

- Cover stock
- Laminated
- UV Coated
- Heavy

UV Coated is often the most popular choice because of its glossy, high-end look. If gloss isn't your thing, you can also use a professional matte finish for your postcards. Options vary depending on the printing service you use.

Decide on Paper Size

Here are the most popular sizes for postcard printing:

- 4" x 6"
- 5" x 7"
- 6" x 9"
- 6 x 11"

Although you can choose any size for your postcard, the most common size is the 4" x 6". It's also the cheapest option in many cases. If you choose a larger postcard, you will pay more per printing and per mailing. Large postcards are also awkward dimensions, and are more likely to get tossed than a smaller postcard that can easily get tucked into a file drawer for later use.

How Often Should You Send Postcards?

According to real estate coach Rich Levin, "Effective postcard frequency is 9 to 12 times annually to your highest-value market, and 4 to 12 times annually to other targeted markets. The goal of any marketing campaign is to create top-of-mind awareness. That means when the targeted market thinks of real estate, your name should come to mind."

Another interesting statistic states that 81% of sales close after the 5th contact. Here's the breakdown:

- 2% close on the 1st call.
- 3% close on the 2nd call.
- 4% close on the 3rd call.
- 10% close on the 4th call.
- 81% close on the 5th call.

When you take into account that most business owners feel dejected and end their postcard marketing campaign after the 3rd round, you can see why a lot of people don't see value. However, when you continuously send postcards to a target demographic, something magical happens and you'll start to see a bigger response after the 5th contact.

Measuring ROI of a Postcard Campaign

How can you determine the effectiveness of your postcard marketing campaign? There are a few different ways to do this:

1. Ask for the source

Whenever a lead contacts you, ask them how they found out about you. But don't stop there. Be sure to mark the source in your CRM (customer relationship management) system. Also mark when they respond and what business results from the interaction. After a while, you'll be able to measure the results of your postcard marketing.

2. Ask for the card back

On your postcard, indicate a value for the client if they return to your office with the card. Unique offers include special discounts on your services or a free coffee. Whatever you think would entice the lead to contact you. Once they return with postcard in hand, be sure to record it in your CRM system.

3. Set up a landing page

Instead, you can set up a quick landing page so you can measure how many people who looked at your postcard then visited your website. Use a unique URL address to the landing page so you know how many visits came from postcards. You can try something like, www.yourwebsite.com/hello or www.yourwebsite.com/mail.

4. Use a QR Code

A QR code that links to a unique landing page is another way to measure who visited your web site after getting one of your postcards. The only drawback for using a QR code is that they take up valuable real estate on your postcard.

The Bottom Line

If you mail them to the right people, keep your message targeted and offer value, a postcard campaign can have a huge impact in your bottom line. Deciding where to focus your marketing dollars these days can be a challenge. Whatever you decide, real estate postcards should be at the top of your list.