

Learning objectives in this lesson

Raising awareness of the techniques used in effective mail shots. Developing students' awareness of the style of language used. By the end of the lesson, students will be able to write an effective mail shot using appropriate language.

- 1 Ask students to work in pairs and discuss the questions before feeding back to the rest of the class.

Answers

Answers will vary. Students may find mail shots irritating and ignore them. However, mail shots are usually most successful when targeted at the right people. If the recipients of a mail shot will clearly benefit from the offer and are willing to buy, then it is likely to be a successful campaign.

- 2 Ask students to read the mail shot and consider the headlines. They should then discuss their opinions in pairs and write in their chosen headline.

Answers

All three of the headlines would work, since they all incorporate the main message. The second option could possibly be the most effective, since the first word is 'free', and this could be very appealing to the reader and encourage them to read on. However, the other headlines clarify the function of the product straight away, so could be more effective for readers who are currently concerned about security.

- 3 Ask students to work in pairs and discuss the advice before feeding back to the rest of the class.

Answers

- 1 This is good advice. The reader will want to know the reason for the letter – otherwise they may not bother to read the letter.
- 2 This is bad advice. A mail shot should convey confidence in the offer. The offer should be explained clearly, with positive language.
- 3 This is good advice. Objective opinions from people who the reader can identify with will increase the reader's confidence in the product and the offer.
- 4 This is bad advice. It should be as easy as possible for the reader to respond. If they have to send a response, the postage should be free. If they need to call a number, that should also be free. Basically, any barrier to the reader responding should be removed where possible.

- 5 This is good advice. The reader will want to know why they should be interested in the offer – what's in it for them.
- 6 This is good advice. It makes the reader feel respected and valued.
- 7 This is good advice. Research has shown that the P.S. is one of the most read sections of a mail shot – probably because the reader's eyes tend to scan down to the bottom to find out who is writing to them.
- 8 This is good advice. The mail shot should encourage a response from the reader – otherwise it has not fulfilled its purpose.
- 9 This is bad advice. It's dangerous ground as not everyone will appreciate the humour and it could be perceived as unprofessional.
- 10 This is bad advice. According to research into mail shots, exclamation marks can be distracting and can also make the mail shot seem less professional.
- 11 This is good advice. If the reader feels there is a danger they might miss out, they are more likely to respond.
- 12 This is bad advice. Complex language could alienate the reader. It's best to stick to simple language that is easily understood by everyone.

- 4 Ask students to work in pairs. They should read the mail shot again and discuss how it could be improved based on the advice they discussed in 3.

Answers

The mail shot generally follows the good pieces of advice in 3. It could be argued that the mail shot doesn't get to the point quickly enough, as the reader doesn't find out about the details of the offer until the fourth paragraph. It could also be argued that the deadline should be mentioned earlier to create a sense of urgency from the beginning.

- 5 Ask students to look at the mail shot again and identify the sentences / phrases for each function. See the following page for the answers.

Answers

- 1 Eliminate this risk now by taking advantage of our special 'three months' free trial' offer. That's right – there is no cost to you for three months. And in three months' time, if you don't think Databuild 3.1 has made your systems safer, then simply return the product.
 - 2 You have been especially chosen for a unique customer offer. You are among 2,000 of our special clients who have qualified for early purchasing of our latest computer protection software.
 - 3 P.S. Don't delay – get Databuild 3.1 before your competitors and be protected for free for three months – offer ends 31st October 2010.
 - 4 *'Since trialling Databuild 3.1 we've had zero security breaches on our system. It's easy to implement and is frankly the best protection software out there right now – we got lucky having early access.'* John Brydon, IT Director, UJ Publishing.
 - 5 Just think – you could have a real edge over your competitors by getting your hands on this software a full six months before it goes on general sale.
 - 6 Just think ..., That's right ..., Sounds too good to be true? Well, try us.
 - 7 Well, try us. Call us now on 435-0201-4965.
 - 8 Hackers could be attacking your computer as we speak. With old versions of protection software and back doors left open on your system, hackers can come in and take what they want, when they want. Eliminate this risk now by taking advantage of our special 'three months' free trial' offer.
- 6 Ask students to think of a product or service. Encourage them to make notes and plan what they want to include in their mail shot. Remind them of the advice they discussed in 3.

Alternative

If your students do not work or cannot think of a product or service they could write a mail shot for, write the following product information on the board. Then ask them to plan what they would include in a mail shot about this product and special offer.

Subscription to sharemydesktop.cz

- special offer – only 3,000 available
- free six-month trial followed by discount offer of 25%
- new features = includes webcam chat and remote control

Testimonial

'I started using 'sharemydesktop' as a way to keep in touch with my business partner who moved to set up our new offices in Brno. With just a couple of clicks he could see everything on my desktop – PowerPoint presentations, spreadsheets, everything. This makes meetings easier and means we don't have to keep sending documents back and forth. With the new webcam feature, we can now see each other as well and the remote control which means my partner can edit files on my desktop. I really don't know how I managed without it!'

- 7 Ask students to work alone and write their mail shot.
- 8 Ask students to exchange mail shots and give feedback to each other. You could then collect the mail shots and provide more detailed feedback in the next lesson.

Evaluation tips

Look at the content and accuracy of the mail shots. Make sure that students have followed the advice. Give feedback on how you think the reader would respond to the mail shot. Don't forget to focus on accuracy too. Mail shots with grammatical mistakes or spelling mistakes will never be well received.

Sample answer

Refer to the mail shot on the students' worksheet for guidance.