

Double Newspaper Response in Less Than 3 Weeks

**Everything You Need to Know Before
Reserving a Newspaper Insert**

Business Survival: a special report

Written by: Sharron Senter, marketing consultant

Double Newspaper Response in Less Than 3 Weeks

Written by: Sharron Senter

One of the quickest ways to make your phone ring, increase Web site visitors and drive foot traffic into your retail store is to advertise using Free Standing Inserts [FSIs], also referred to in newspaper circles as Preprints or Print and Deliver. I'll refer to them as FSIs, newspaper inserts and flyers.

The greatest benefit of using newspaper inserts is visibility. Inserts easily surpass the exposure of a traditional print advertisement printed within the newspaper's pages. Instead, with newspaper inserts, when readers open a newspaper, an insert falls onto their lap. If they're hungry for your products or services, they'll read your message that moment.

What is a newspaper insert?

It's a single standalone sheet of paper that's inserted inside the center fold of a newspaper. The most common format is 8.5 X 11 inches, one-color and single-sided. It can be larger, with more colors and double-sided; however, you'll pay more. In most instances, I don't recommend the latter. A professionally-designed, single-sided, black and white flyer on colored stock will represent most businesses professionally and generate the response rate you desire.

Why three weeks to double your response rates?

Because it takes on average three weeks from the time you make your FSI space reservation before your insert can be printed and inserted.

What type of businesses benefit from inserts?

Businesses that market to consumers benefit the most from inserts. For example, a tax accountant targeting professional couples would benefit greatly from inserting an FSI in January encouraging couples to get their taxes done early. A retail store running a "Spring Blow Out" sale would benefit. A karate studio wanting to generate registrations for summer classes would benefit. A gift basket business with a retail and Web site storefront looking to promote its graduation gift baskets would benefit. I don't recommend businesses marketing to other businesses use FSIs, unless you're inserting into a business trade journal; then it's very appropriate.

What type of return should you anticipate?

You should anticipate a one percent response, meaning someone picks up the phone and calls, stops by your store or visits your Web site, regardless of whether or not they've actually purchased.

9 Considerations Before Buying Newspaper Inserts

#1 - The nice thing about newspapers is that you don't have to advertise to the entire newspaper distribution. Rather, you can buy one zone, a geographic area or group of zip codes. This is usually true for newspapers that have a 20,000 circulation or greater. For example, one of my local newspapers is called *The Eagle Tribune*. It has a daily circulation of approximately 55,000 and is distributed to more than 15 cities and towns. I can select specific zip codes to have my insert distributed to, rather than distribute my message to all 55,000 readers. The only exception is that most newspapers require minimum insertion orders. In this case,

you must order a minimum of 10,000 flyers to be inserted, or you pay a higher rate. In some cases, the newspaper won't insert unless you order a minimum quantity. Each paper has its own rules.

2 – Most newspapers charge “per 1000 circulation” when determining advertising fees for FSIs. [Newspapers often refer to the word “thousand” as “m” on advertising rate cards, i.e., 10m = 10 thousand.] The average cost for FSIs is \$55 to \$59 per thousand. This price buys you a single-sided, one-color, designed [by newspaper staff], printed, inserted and delivered, FSI. For example, if the newspaper's circulation is 15,000 and its cost per thousand is \$57, your final cost would be \$855: $[15,000/1,000 = 15 \times \$57 = \$855.]$

#3 – Plan at least six weeks in advance for your first FSI. Most newspapers require a space reservation at least three weeks before the insertion date, preferably six weeks; artwork is usually required at the same time.

4 – Use a professional graphic designer. Don't use the newspaper's, although their services are included in the price as stated in #2. I can't stress this enough; most newspaper designers are overextended, and therefore, simply don't have the time to provide the quality you deserve. What's more, your ad will look just like everyone else's, since most advertisers cut corners and use the newspaper's “house” designers. I know several affordable graphic designers if you need a referral.

I recently managed an FSI project for one of my marketing clients. He was on a tight budget, so he opted for the newspaper's designer. The first draft was terrible! We ended up paying a professional designer. When budgeting for a professional to

design your flyer, plan to spend an additional \$250-\$400. Flyers are considered basic design projects. If you're paying much more than what I've described; you're being ripped off. However, if a designer senses you don't know what you want, they'll beef up their fees assuming they'll need to make a lot of edits. Be organized with your sales copy and strategy before approaching any designer. They have a keen sense of sniffing out novices, a.k.a. time-consuming clients. The latter is true for any type of consultant.

5 – Give serious consideration to the day of the week you insert. For example, one of my local newspapers only has a business page on Mondays. Since my client was appealing to the business reader, it made sense for us to insert on a Monday, assuming that the business readership would be higher that day. Also, consider running on Mondays for newspapers that have no Sunday distribution. Readers would have already had a day off from the news and will be looking to get reconnected first thing Monday morning.

6 – You'll usually receive a higher response from newspapers that are mailed or hand-delivered and paid for. I'm not downing free publications; some are outstanding. Generally speaking, however, I recommend advertising in for-fee publications. The fee qualifies the sincerity of your audience ever so slightly. Ever little bit helps.

7 – Consider the retention value of your message. One of the other businesses I own is called www.VisitingGeeks.com. We provide on site computer repair and networking services for businesses and home power users north of Boston through southern Maine. We use FSIs frequently to drive business. And although we receive the brunt of the calls within the first five days of insertion, we continue

to get calls from flyers inserted six months prior. As long as there's no expiration date to your message, prospects hold onto flyers. Still, sometimes, even if your promotion expired, the reader will hold onto the flyer.

8 – The more you market your business, the more media attention you'll receive. Over the course of the past year, two of my clients have received calls from their respective newspapers' reporters asking if they'd be interested in being featured in a story. In both instances, the reporter learned about my clients after seeing their FSIs.

#9 – Not all newspapers are created equal. Pay particularly close attention to the newspaper's readership demographics. Make sure they match your target audience, i.e., income, age, children (no children) zip codes, home ownership (renters), have broadband (no broadband), etc.

What to Include On Your Flyer

- Your business logo
- Special offer with an expiration date
- Strong call-to-action, including Web site URL, phone number and address.
- Membership logos to help increase credibility, such as chamber of commerce, manufacture certifications, etc.
- Brief sales copy with heavy emphasis on your products and services benefits
- The one thing that makes you different from your competition
- Strong headline with your customer's greatest challenge or problem in the form of a statement or question
- Store hours

- Parking availability
- Refreshments. If you're hosting an event, I encourage you to provide food.

FSI Artwork Production

In terms of delivering your artwork to the newspaper, each paper has its own preferences. Some prefer emailed PDFs, others want artwork on disk, still others have a more formal process whereby you upload your artwork files and complete an online advertising order at their Web site.

Printing FSIs

Most newspapers offer insert printing services. Take them up on it. An insert project almost always includes the cost of printing. You won't save anything trying to find your own printer. When you break out the average cost of designing, printing, inserting and delivering into a newspaper, your cost on average is \$0.06 per flyer. Could a printer beat this per piece price? Yes. However, they can't insert and deliver it at this price. What's more, it's easier to let the newspaper manage the printing, it's one less activity you need to manage.

Some newspapers manage their own printing and others have a "partner" to whom they outsource all specialty advertising printing. Either way, your pricing remains the same. The only downside to the newspaper using a third party vendor is that your deadlines will be longer and more fixed. However, if they're managing the project in-house, they'll have more flexibility.

Space Reservations

As I've mentioned, most newspapers want to know up to six weeks before what day you want to insert and how many. However, if you're organized and already

have your flyer designed, not printed, just ready to go for the newspaper to print, I've inserted with as little as two weeks notice. I would not attempt this on your first try.

Paying for Inserts

If you've never conducted business with a newspaper prior to your insert project, chances are you'll need to prepay for your first insert. Then, so as long as you have good credit, you'll be invited to set up an account and pay like any other advertiser after the ad runs for all future advertising. The unfortunate thing about prepaying, is that you have very little recourse if things don't go as you requested. For example, you asked for an insertion in Zip Code A, and instead, the newspaper inserted into Zip Code B.

Final Artwork Sign Off

If the newspaper designs your flyer, make sure you physically see the final version AND sign off. It's very easy for an old draft to be mistakenly printed and inserted.

Purchase a Newspaper

Be sure to pick up a copy of the newspaper the day your insert runs. It's the only way to ultimately know if your flyer was inserted. I stop off at several different distribution points [grocery store, convenience store, newspaper box on the street] to see how my flyer looks. For example, I want to know that when my sales rep. told me that no other flyers were inserting that day, that, in fact, it's true. Not that you have any recourse if it isn't, other than to confront the rep and stress it not happen again. When it comes to any form of newspaper advertising, never be a passenger.

Sharron's Biggest Lessons!

I've managed a lot of newspaper insert projects. Save yourself time, energy and money by not repeating my mistakes!

- When you're making an insert space reservation, make sure you ask if the newspaper is distributing any type of special sections that day. For example, each spring most newspapers distribute a spring real estate section, often as a tabloid inserted into a broadsheet newspaper. What's the lesson? Your flyer insert will get lost among the oversized tabloid insert. Worse, it may get stuck inside the special section. Why is this worse? Because if your target audience isn't interested in the special section's subject [real estate] they won't open and read it, and therefore, will miss your insert. So avoid days when newspapers distribute special sections. The exception is if your products and services complement the special section. For example, it would be appropriate for a real estate broker to insert her flyer within the real estate special section.
- In the same vein, avoid days when they'll be a lot of other inserts such as grocery store circulars, competitor inserts, etc. Since most newspapers require at least a three week lead time for an insert space reservation, they'll have a good idea what other inserts will be occurring on the day you're interested in.
- Because you can reach so many people literally overnight by inserting into newspapers, you need to be prepared to handle the extra call volume, Web site traffic and product and service offers. If you don't, all is for not. I can't stress this enough. Better to be overstaffed and overstocked, than under. I also recommend you insert as few as possible on your first try. If the minimum is 5,000 inserts, then start with that. You won't save much with

your cost-per-thousand by going with a larger quantity, so be conservative and insert less on your first attempt. Give yourself a chance to fine tune operational processes -- test your message, the impact and if you can easily manage the extra customer volume.

- Don't leave anything to chance when working with newspaper sales reps. Too many haven't managed enough FSI projects to know the nuances that'll help your project go smoothly. Most importantly, never trust them to advise you on what final artwork and format is needed. Always ask to speak with a production person. I've been buying newspaper advertising for 14 years. I haven't met a sales rep yet who understands artwork requirements and can speak confidently about his/her publication's requirements.
- In general, I find that most newspaper sales reps are not your advocates; rather, they're order takers and don't understand effective newspaper advertising strategies. Don't lean on them to help you design or write your ad. They don't know any more than your neighbor. When communicating with your sales rep, you need to be concerned with deadlines, artwork requirements, minimum orders and final costs. Keep pushing for firm, consistent answers.
- Don't bother signing an annual contract with the newspaper just for FSIs, unless you plan to insert at least once a month. You won't save very much, but you will strap yourself with a binding contract.

Disadvantages of FSIs

- They're a one-hit-wonder. Some people simply won't read the newspaper the day your insert is scheduled to run. Of course, newspapers won't tell you this, nor will they have a firm handle on how many people "really" read the newspaper every day. They'll simply cite you printed readership rates.

- I feel strongly that when you advertise in a newspaper, you should do so repeatedly for at least six weeks. FSIs go against my philosophy. Then why do I make an exception? Because for the right business, message and product offering combination, they're extremely powerful. They increase your call volume threefold the day they hit.

Other Places to Insert Flyers

- Trade Journals
- Chamber of Commerce Newsletters
- Association & Organizational Newsletters
- Your Client's Customer Newsletters
- Your Customer Newsletters
- Post It to Your Web site
- Distribute it as a self-mailer to your existing customer base and prospect list.

Final Thoughts

I don't particularly care for the advertisements that show up in mailboxes filled with just ads. I think there's too much competition [other inserts]. What's more, if you're targeting a high-end customer, someone earning more than \$100,000 annually, this customer is generally not reading sales flyers stuffed in a medium that is exclusively ads.

If you have any questions about newspaper inserts please let me know. I want to make sure this report covers everything about newspaper insert advertising. Your questions will help me to continue to improve this report.

About The Author



Sharron Senter is a New-England based marketing consultant, speaker, writer and founder of Senter & Associates, a marketing communications boutique that helps businesses deploy profit-producing online and offline marketing tactics. She's recently been quoted on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* and inside *Inc. Magazine*, *Entrepreneur Magazine*, *Contractor Replacement*, *San Diego Daily Transcript* and *Albany Times Union*. Sharron's been helping businesses deploy marketing strategies since 1990. She is well known for her free monthly emailed marketing tip ezine, now in its fourth year of circulation with international readership. Contact Sharron at sharron@sharronsenter.com or sign up for her free marketing tips at <http://www.sharronsenter.com/fmt.htm>.

Report Guarantee: If you're unsatisfied with my report, I truly would like to know. It's important to me that you learn fresh ideas to help you generate revenue for your business. If you do not find the new ideas you're looking for, email me at sharron@sharronsenter.com. I'll provide you the additional feedback you need, or you can simply return my report for your money back.

Feedback: I welcome any feedback you have about my report. I'm always trying to improve my reports and reaffirm what lessons I've learned. I'd especially love to hear about successes you've had after implementing strategies outlined in my report. Email me anytime at sharron@sharronsenter.com.

Check it out!

Check out my other marketing reports and recorded audio CDs at www.sharronsenter.com/fs.htm I generally add a new report/CD every 30 to 45 days.

New Reports Include:

- *19 Ways to Increase Profits in Less Than 90 Days*
- *How to Increase Prices without Irritating Customers*
- **Top Seller** *A Secret Marketing Weapon – How to Submit Expert Articles Online that Drive Qualified Leads to Your Web site*

New CDs Include:

- *Successfully Selling Your Professional Services – Overcome Fear of Selling*
- *Low-cost Secrets to Landing Corporate Accounts*
- *Protecting Your Home-based Business from Viruses, Worms & Hackers – Security 101 in Laymen's Terms*
- *Outlast & Outclass Your Competition – How to Make First Impressions that Increase Your Bottom-line*

Additional Revenue Stream

Do you need another revenue stream for your business? If so, consider my affiliate program. **There's no cost to participate.** As an affiliate, you're allowed to resell my special marketing reports and CDs and receive 40% of the revenue. You can learn more about my affiliate program at

http://www.sharronsenter.com/affiliate_program.htm

ORDER FORM

Give the Gift of “**Increase Newspaper Response in Less Than 3 Weeks**”
Report to Your Friends and Colleagues.

____ YES, I want ____ copies of “*Increase Newspaper Response in Less Than 3 Weeks*” report for only \$27 each. Reports arrive individually bound inside protected folders, perfect for distributing to friends and associates.

____ YES, I’m interested in having Sharron Senter give a seminar to my company, association or organization. Please send information.

Include one dollar [\$1.00] per report for shipping and handling. Massachusetts residents please include 5% sales tax with your order. Payment must accompany order. Please allow 3 weeks for delivery.

My check or money order for \$ ____ is enclosed.

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Make your check payable and return to:
Senter & Associates, 39 Bear Hill Road, Merrimac, MA 01860

Questions, please call (978) 346-4086
www.sharronsenter.com