

# How Direct Mail Planning Is Like Forming A Super Bowl Champion

by Scott Oser



**N**ow that football season is over, I really hate to use football analogies. Unfortunately when you live and die with the Washington Redskins (no

heckling, please,) it is difficult to ever stop thinking about the great fall sport. (I apologize upfront to anyone who is against using sports as an analogy in business, but I just couldn't help myself). In my opinion, creating a successful direct mail campaign is very similar to developing a strong football squad. Here is what I mean:

**Know your goals.** Like a good group of hard-nosed football players, you will never get where you want unless you have set goals in advance. Do you want to increase response? Improve ROI? Decrease CPO? Know what you want to accomplish with your campaign before you do anything else or risk fumbling throughout the whole production process.

**Form a strong team.** One person cannot do everything. That is true in football, and it is true in direct mail. Even if John Riggins (notice the Redskins reference) is your world beating running back, he needs someone to block for him and get him the ball. The same is true for anyone doing direct mail. Make sure that you get a strong team of people around you and allow them to help you do your job. Your team should consist of people both inside (co-workers) and outside (vendors) of your company. Bring these individuals to the table as early in the process as possible. They can help you make your campaign as effective as possible, as many brains are always better than one.

## Watch your back (side/end).

Ask any quarterback what keeps him up at night and he will probably say the fear of getting hit from the back-side. In direct mail, the fear is slightly different, but the negative results are just as likely. While a quarterback is worrying about their back-side, people in direct mail need to worry about their back-end. If you do not know upfront that your back-end system has the ability to track and analyze the results of your campaign, there is no way for you to know if it met your goals. Always check your back-end to make sure you can read your campaign results effectively.

**Check the clock.** Time management is very important to a good football team, and to good direct mail production. If you do not set out timelines and expectations for deliverables, you will not

be prepared to meet your goals and your deadlines. Before you do anything, work with your team to put together an achievable timeline that will be used to guide you through your campaign.

As the coach of your direct mail team, it is your responsibility to put together a strong game plan that your team can follow. If you follow the playbook listed above, you are almost guaranteed to have a better chance of ending up a champion instead of a cellar dweller.

*Scott Oser is president of marketing, circulation, sales, and membership consultancy, Scott Oser Associates, Inc. The company brings over 14 years of experience to the table in helping organizations develop and implement effective marketing, membership and sales programs for products and services, sponsorship, exhibits, advertising sales, and membership recruitment and retention. For more information, visit [www.scottoserassociates.com](http://www.scottoserassociates.com), call 301-279-0468, or email [scott@scottoserassociates.com](mailto:scott@scottoserassociates.com).*

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