

# Direct Mail FAQs

What are carrier route maps? A carrier route is the group of addresses to which an individual postal carrier (mailman) delivers mail. There are usually multiple carrier routes, and therefore mail carriers, in a ZIP code. Carrier routes are never part of more than one ZIP code. A carrier route map simply shows the geographic boundaries that delineate carrier routes.

Why are carrier route maps important? Carrier route maps offer several benefits:

- Lowest postage rates - to get the lowest postage rates, a mailing should be a saturation mailing. A saturation mailing is simply any mailing campaign that mails to at least 90% of the residential addresses within a postal carrier route. To ensure compliance, The [Church Marketing Institute \(CMI\)](#) recommends always targeting 100% of a route. Many mailers erroneously think that a saturation mailing must be conducted by ZIP Code but the actual definitions from the USPS for the maximum saturation discount uses the carrier route as the defining region.
- Homogeneous Demographics - The demographic makeup within an individual carrier route is often relatively homogeneous. ZIP code demographics often vary across the area. By getting demographic information for carrier routes, you gain a better understanding of the population throughout that carrier route. CMI is able to provide age and income reports at the carrier route level.
- Natural geographic boundaries - Carrier routes are often broken down by natural geographic boundaries (e.g. subdivisions, roads, rivers, interstates, etc). These are the same barriers that many people are hesitant (or unable) to cross to attend church. To maximize the effectiveness of a mailing, the mailing should not cross more boundaries than people are likely to cross. For example a ZIP code may cross an interstate which a carrier route is much less likely to cross. The Church Planter should consider limiting the mailing to the near side of the interstate if traffic patterns indicate people don't cross that barrier.
- Finalizing the Definition of Target Area - Before a direct-mail campaign can be sent, a final target area must be defined and approved. With the carrier route maps in hand the Church Planter approves the final mailing area. To obtain the best postage rates entire carrier routes should be targeted. If possible, a new church plant should target all the homes within reasonable driving distance of the church meeting place. In moderate to heavily populated areas, the average person will not drive further than 4-5 miles to church.

How do I get carrier route maps? [Church Marketing Solutions \(CMS\)](#) offers free carrier route mapping to customers who are using their print and labeling services.

How many cards should you mail? Once the number of homes to be targeted has been determined, the number of cards to be sent to each home must be determined. Since people tend to respond more favorably the more times they are exposed to a church and the more times they see a postcard from a church, multiple cards are recommended.

Repetition is key in the world of direct mail. Consider this example. If John gets a card in the mail, chances are he will throw it away without even reading the whole thing, maybe without even turning it over. If he gets a second card the following week - not the exact same card, but a similar looking card, he might be curious and read some of it, but may still throw it away. By the third week there is a greater possibility that he will read the card and respond favorably. Simply stated, sending multiple cards increases your response rate.

Financial constraints may be a large factor in determining the number of different cards in a new church's startup mailing campaign. Direct mail campaigns can be expensive. Church Marketing Solutions (CMS) recommends a minimum of 3 different cards for a direct-mail campaign. CMS has also seen good results with 4 card mailings (3 cards leading up to launch day and one card after launch). Additionally, a 4 card mailing is cheaper on a per card basis than a 3 card or 5 card mailing because a 4 cards mailing utilizes standard size printing paper. CMS recommends that most church planters go with a 4 card mailing if possible.

The total number of cards to be printed must be determined. The total includes those cards that will be mailed plus any extras to have on hand for giving away. Marketing organizations like Church Marketing Solutions have a service that is used to determine the number of homes and organizations in the target area.

Some organization like Church Marketing Solutions pool card orders together to save churches money. This is referred to CARDPOOLing.

What is CARDPOOL? In general, the more cards that are printed at the same time, the lower the cost per card. For example, one job of 30,000 cards may cost 8 cents per card to print while 8 jobs of 30,000 cards printed at the same time may cost as little as 5 cents per card. To obtain the lowest possible prices, Church Marketing Solutions attempts to "pool" several different print jobs together to reduce the cost to each organization.

CARDPOOL is grouping multiple print jobs of like quantity together to obtain the lowest price. CARDPOOL is normally available to organizations identifying their specific print jobs at least one month in advance of their need date. Through CARDPOOL, churches on a limited budget can obtain per card costs that are normally only possible for very large organizations.

Why should I order extra cards? Many church planters find it beneficial to order several hundred to several thousand extra cards. These cards can be handed out at outreach events, placed on counters at local businesses, given to launch team members to give to their friends, neighbors and coworkers as well as distributed in other ways to the local community. If properly designed, the cards may even be useful in these ways after launch. Many people like to have something they can hand to their friends to invite them to church. A well designed card can be a great tool for this purpose. Of course the

Church Planter should consider these possible uses as the cards are designed to ensure their continued usefulness.

Much thought and prayer should be put into determining the design and content of a direct-mail card. A bad card design will at best end up in a trash can and at worst reflect poorly on the church, creating a negative impression of both the church and Christianity. A good card design will draw the person in and move them to respond to the card.

The front of the postcard is critical in determining whether or not a person will read the card. It is critical to design cards which people will want to turn over and keep. An engaging design or content which asks a very simple question will increase the likelihood that an individual will turn your card over to read the back.

Whenever possible, a professional designer should be hired to complete the design of the cards. Poorly designed cards will not attract people to the church. Additionally, the print shop used to print the cards will have very specific guidelines on file types and quality that a professional designer will be able to meet.

Consumer software will most likely not provide the correct files for the print shop. [Church Marketing Solutions](#) (CMS) offers low cost design services for customers which are far below the typical rate for these services. CMS also offers [CARDSHARE](#) which lowers design costs even more.

[CARDSHARE](#): Churches obtain printing and labeling services from [Church Marketing Solutions](#) (CMS) also have access to royalty free card designs. These card designs are available to be customized for a very low price. New designs are frequently added to the [CARDSHARE library](#). CMS also ensures that the same card design is never used in a target area more than once.

The Church Planter will need to provide input to the designer about who they are trying to reach (the [Average Target Family](#)) and what the purpose and style of the cards should be ([Project Briefing Sheet](#)). It is imperative that the cards are designed with this input specifically in mind. A card that works great in one context may not be effective in another. Additionally the Church Planter will need to provide content to the designer.

Style: A well designed card will draw people to your church. The style of the card will help determine if it draws the *right* people to your church. Truth in advertising is very important. Don't promise something you can't deliver. If you are a traditional church and want to attract traditional people, a traditional design is great for you. If you laugh in church and have a more loose casual style, a casual and humorous card would be appropriate. Make sure that the colors, layout, and graphics all come together to communicate a style that is consistent with what people will experience on Sunday morning. If not you will draw the wrong people and they will leave unsatisfied while the people who would have connected with your church will never even try because the card won't appeal to them.

Content: There are two basic questions everyone asks as they look at a card. What's in it for me? What do I do? You'll want to make sure both of those questions are answered simply and directly. Don't make them read three paragraphs of text before you tell them why they should try your church. Don't make them have to hunt to find where you meet and at what time. Make key information easy to find. Remember, you only have a few seconds of their attention, don't waste your limited time telling people things they don't need or want to know. At a minimum you should include your logo, phone number, meeting location/map, meeting times and website address.

Lowest Possible Postage Rates: Most church planters do a saturation direct mailing in the weeks leading up to launch day. To obtain the best postage rate possible, the cards should be drop shipped to each individual post office in the target area. The Church Planter will take all the post cards to the post office where the bulk mail permit is located to check them in and pay the postage. Once that is complete, the church planter will take the cards that are delivered from other post offices to those post offices. They will not need to be rechecked at the other post offices.