

### Making Money In Mail By Finding a Niche

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MAIL: The Journal of Communication Distribution

#### *Shakespeare Mailing Service*

When Hal Hochhauser announced to his friends that he was starting a mailing company to specifically serve actors, it raised a few eyebrows. "Why would anyone want to serve clients that are notoriously poor and out of work," they whispered. After 5 months in business Shakespeare had only six clients, so when he said to his partner "If we don't get 100 clients in the next six-weeks we're going to have to close our doors," it was to be expected.

That was over a decade ago, and Hochhauser, owner and founder of Shakespeare Mailing Service in New York, NY, did find 100 actors to sign up for his company's specialized direct mail service. He still vividly recalls the many landmarks in his company's development. "It was 1989, 2 days before Christmas when Paul Newman's office called, referred to us by one of our clients. As chairman of the Actors Studio, Mr. Newman needed to get a fund raiser mailing out right away, so I spent a good part of Christmas week doing a 3,000 piece personalized mailing using a daisy wheel printer," said Hochhauser. "Until then, most of our clients sent to only 50 or 100 people per mailing. This job opened my eyes to new possibilities and we've been growing ever since."

Today, Shakespeare is a full service direct mail lettershop that serves a full range of clients doing small volume mailings, 100 items to 100,000. Located in New York's theatre district they still, however, cater to the special needs of professional actors by creating their promotional materials – resumes, photo postcards, 8x10's, etc. -- *and mailing them.*

"Newman's call saved the company," says Hochhauser. "He forced us to re-direct our efforts which has made us a more secure and profitable organization." But it was Hochhauser's initiative that sprung Shakespeare to the national stage. "I always wanted to own a business that was uniquely New York. At age 30 I quit my position as convention services manager with the New York Grand Hyatt, giving myself six weeks to decide what kind of business to start. During that time an actor friend said, 'I wish I had someone to do my mailings for me.'"

Three weeks later, Shakespeare Mailing Service opened its doors in a tiny 9'x10' office with a specific goal – *help*

*actors use mail to promote themselves to professionals in the industry who can help them get work.* "Since 1987 we have advanced the careers of thousands of actors by applying the marketing techniques commonly used in business," Hochhauser said.

This goal has remained constant, but Shakespeare's menu of services and resources have kept pace with the latest advances in technology. Shakespeare has established a home page on the internet with helpful information for all their clients, and what Hochhauser calls "the world's best on-line picture and resume service". Shakespeare has also developed proprietary software with a database of the people who can help actors get work. Their clients can view industry profiles from which they create a personal mailing list. Shakespeare then prepares the promotion and the message and gets it to the post office.

The web page is part of Hochhauser's efforts to expand the business beyond the New York metro area, and to that end he also installed a toll-free number to help serve actors working around the country and in "hot spots" such as Los Angeles.

The toll-free phone number and the web site illustrate that Shakespeare does more than slap labels on envelopes, typeset resumes or build mailing lists for actors. One of the most successful promotional pieces Hochhauser has developed for his clients is a postcard with a photo on the front and a personalized, typeset message on the back. "We virtually turn a postcard into a hi-impact promotional piece." And if an actor cannot think of what to say, the knowledgeable staff at Shakespeare will help to write their message.

Hochhauser also devised a "Promotion Plan" – a direct mail strategy that helps to create recognition and keep the actor in front of her audience. One client using this plan sent out mailings every month to 100 agents and casting directors, and during the course of a year and was contacted by 75 people. While quick to say this type of success is unusual, Hochhauser does say the repetition and frequency of this program makes it a successful marketing tool, with clients typically "making more money through the plan than it cost to pay for it, and sometimes even booking the role of their dreams."

"Actors at all levels of success use our mailing service to establish relationships and expand their careers," said Hochhauser. Just ask Paul Newman.

