

# W7

**Wednesday  
Morning  
Fax**  
*from*  
**The  
Castle  
Press**

## **9** tips from Matthew Samp on designing to boost direct-mail response

- **Make your letters look like letters**  
Do not set your letter type in Helvetica or Times Roman or other popular type fonts available on your computer. "Set it in Courier or some other font that makes your letter look as if it came from an old IBM typewriter," Matthew Samp advises. "A letter should look as personal as possible. Using foundry fonts kills this illusion."
- **Set your letter text in black on white paper**  
Research shows that people will read letters and brochures more often if they are easy on the eyes, and black on white is the easiest combination, Samp says.
- **Never reverse text type**  
"Knocking text out of a colored background, especially a textured colored background, will make body copy virtually impossible to read. Just don't do it," Samp urges.
- **Avoid anything that looks canned**  
Make the signature on your letter look real. Add "handwritten" marginal notes. Use a yellow "highlighter" to call out important copy, such as benefits.
- **Provide detailed, clear instructions**  
People tend to do what you tell them to do, Samp says. "So always give them complete instructions, especially on your reply device." "Fold and tear here," "Over, please," "Please turn the page" may seem moronic to you but actually are important tools that maximize response, he advises.

**"The purpose of graphic design in direct mail is to attract the reader's attention, make the words communicate with the least effort on the part of the reader, and to illustrate products and services clearly and concisely. That's all."**

—Matthew Samp

- **Pay particular attention to your envelope copy and graphics**  
If your reader does not feel compelled to open your envelope, your mailing is 100% wasted, Samp warns.
- **Play "origami" first**  
Fold and scribble on plain paper—to show how headlines will cross folds, how photos and illustrations will appear, and how powerfully your reply device will cue response from your reader—to make sure that every element in your mailing package is designed to make maximum possible impact on the recipient, Samp counsels.
- **Do not make every unit in your mailing match**  
Designers, according to Samp, tend to make each piece in a mailing match the appearance of its other pieces. The tendency should be firmly discouraged. "At the risk of sounding blasphemous," Samp writes, "corporate identity should take a back seat to function in a direct-mail package."
- **Keep your production lean and mean**  
Respect production costs when you design a mailing package, Samp stresses. "Success or failure is determined by comparing income to costs," he advises.

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