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Fax

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Press

12 pointers toward successful direct mail—Part 2 of 2

■ Start strong

Your mailing must grab the recipient's attention right away. Leo Bott, the Chicago mail-order guru, estimates that your typical sales prospect takes five seconds to decide whether to go on reading, or to toss your package into the round file. No time for foreplay.

The “hot buttons” of a mailing package—the elements that people read most—comprise the letter's first paragraphs, its subheads, its last paragraph, and (for 80% of its readers) its P.S. Other high-readership areas include:

- Your folder's cover headline, subheads, and inside-spread headline.
- Picture captions and call-outs.
- The headline and copy on your order form.

■ Follow up effectively

- Fulfill all orders and information requests within 48 hours.
- Send additional mailings to persons who did not respond to your first attempt.
- Direct mail followed by telemarketing produces two to 10 times more response than mailings alone, says Dwight Reichard of Pittsburgh's Federated Investors Inc.
- Include a strong sales letter and an order form in your replies to inquiries.

■ Use the magic words

- Your mother was right: “Please” and “thank you” work wonders.
- Stress “free” ... “no obligation” ... “no salesperson will call” ... “details inside” ...

“When choosing between two evils, I always like to try the one I've never tried before.”

—Mae West

“limited time only” (remember to specify the closing date) ... “announcing” or “at last” ... or “new.”

■ Write to your prospect—not about your product

- Assume that your prospective customer does not compare a rat's patoot about your product or service. He or she only wants to know, “What's in it for me?”

■ Appeal to all 5 senses

- Unlike TV commercials or print ads, direct mailings can appeal to all the senses. Consider making your mailing more resultful by including a solid object, or by adding a fragrance or a sound. It costs—but one company generated a 30% response by including a videocassette in its mailing. Product samples also often work.

■ Avoid committees

Almost unfailingly, committee decisions hamstring the potential of mailing packages. Ask any mail-advertising veteran. Despite all objective evidence to the contrary, for example, every committee includes at least one stubborn person who insists that people will refuse to read or respond to long copy. That's just one prejudice that gums up the works.

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