

# W8

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## **6** ways to make sure your invoices help response

Hallie Mummert, editor in chief of TARGET MARKETING and INSIDE DIRECT MAIL writes that smart marketers know that gross response is only half the story. Payup is equally important.

She quotes copywriter Barbara Harrison and renewals/invoice expert David Rosen as urging six invoicing do's and don'ts:

- Make sure that your respondents realize that they have not paid their bills.

Ms. Harrison advises that you should avoid the common practice of using invoicing copy that says that an invoice may have crossed a respondent's payment in the mail.

The recipient might misinterpret your message to mean that he/she already has paid.

- Don't make your invoices too graphic or entertaining. Your goal is to trigger a payment. You don't want anything to detract from the urgency of your bill.
- Vary the look of your invoices, Harrison says, citing the "numbing effect" of graphic similarity.

Varying the paper stock and color of the outer envelope can make a difference in getting your message read—and acted on— she writes.

Rosen adds that late efforts in the series should not feature the word "invoice" on the outer envelope, nor display your company name.

**"The value of life is not in the length of days, but in the use we make of them."**

—Michel de Montaigne

- Do not use a threatening "final invoice"—even late in your invoice series.

A better strategy, says Rosen, is to emphasize the status of the unpaid account and the consequences of continuing to withhold payment. Otherwise, says Rosen, the respondent is happy to know that this is the last bill he or she will get. And, if you send another invoice after the "final" one, your credibility is shot.

- Never mention the use of a collection agency in your invoices, unless you plan to hire one. It's not legal if you don't intend to use one, says Rosen.

If you do plan to use a third party to collect unpaid accounts, he says, foreshadow this event at least two bills before it happens.

- Avoid making an up-sell or cross-sell offer late in your invoice efforts, Harrison advises. Some billers offer a service extension in their first few invoices. Once you get past the second or third invoice, she advises, keep the focus of the bill solely on getting paid.

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