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**Wednesday
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Fax**
from
**The
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3 pointers on getting direct-mail envelopes open

Your outer mailing envelope can't say too little, and it can't say too much, either, writes New York direct-marketing expert David R. Yale. "If it doesn't say enough, it probably won't get opened. If it gives away too much ... it will quickly be discarded." He offers these three tips on how to motivate recipients to open your envelopes:

■ **Straightforward benefit statements don't cut it any more**

Once upon a time, all an advertiser needed to do was to state a juicy benefit or two on the outer envelope to prompt recipients to open a mailing to explore its insides – but that's not enough today, Yale says.

An estimated 87,000 advertising messages every month bombard your sales prospects. And so many advertisers overstate the benefits they offer that even people who are not utterly cynical believe that without opening the envelope they know what a mailing will claim. Result: more advertising clogging trash cans.

■ **Tickle your sales prospect's fancy**

As advertising great Bill Bernbach was fond of observing, you cannot bore people into buying from you. So – without going to bizarre extremes, which draw more attention to the advertisement than to the product it advertises – constantly test new approaches.

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Yale says that envelope copy like, "*Wump! Wump! Wump! The competitors went down one by one. Until only the new kid on the block was left standing.*" creates reader curiosity, acquisitiveness, and, perhaps, fear of feeling out of date. Another kind of headline tells an intriguing story: "*Leg pain kept Lois off the dance floor for years. Last night she waltzed up a storm.*" will prompt many readers to open your envelope, when a dull, literal catalog of benefits will fail.

■ **Follow a three-pronged creative strategy**, Yale advises:

1. Take a page out of image advertising's book. Strive to make your outer envelopes more *memorable, dramatic, and compelling*.
2. Always remember that advertising plays on *human emotions*. Fear and greed are two of the strongest drives. "Add a dash of hope, a jigger of guilt, and a cupful of exclusivity to the recipe, and most people will find it hard to resist," Yale notes.
3. *Build jobs around existing controls*, Yale urges, so you don't need to start every creative test from scratch.

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