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4 ways to involve readers in your offer

“Involvement,” writes direct-marketing ace Lee Marc Stein, is to plunge your sales prospect into a situation from which withdrawal is difficult.

“That’s exactly what we want our direct-mail packages to do,” he says. We want the reader to open the mailing, pay attention, and perceive that the only means of escape is to order.

■ Quick Copy Hook Vital

Stein writes, “If after the Johnson Box or opening paragraph of the letter, the prospect is not nodding his head and saying, ‘Yes, this sounds like something I want to find out more about,’ ... you’re not likely to get the order.”

But smart advertisers don’t stop there, he advises. They use physical gimmicks that engage the reader’s sense of play – and are almost hypnotically powerful tools in generating orders. “We want to get the prospect’s body – especially his/her hands – involved ... lifting, affixing, scratching, separating, inserting.”

■ Stickers

Stein says that for maximum involvement both a “Yes” sticker and the area to place it should appear close to each other on the order form. It makes the recipient more likely to connect the dots in your favor.

A “**gratuitous**” sticker is a device that is not intended to be used with your order form, Stein says. Some publishers, for example, include also “No” and “Maybe” stickers with their

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“Yes” devices, because they have learned that optional “No” and “Maybe” responses encourage “Yes” replies.

■ Odd-Shaped Reply Mechanisms

Stein notes that many winning mailers contain L-shaped response devices. “The prospect can’t stand the incongruity,” he says, so usually detaches the smaller reply portion from the whole device.

Even if your response form is not L-shaped, Stein says, it is effective to include a perforated area that your prospect must remove before returning his order card.

Requiring your prospect to do something – anything – physical usually boosts response, Stein says.

■ Scratch-Offs and Rub-Offs

Stein notes that die-cut tokens seem to be waning in popularity.

But he loves scratch-off or rub-off tokens. You add the mystery element to physical involvement when you run copy underneath the surface of the token, he says. The copy, for instance, could promote a premium, encourage rapid replies, or burn in an offer of extra benefits.

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