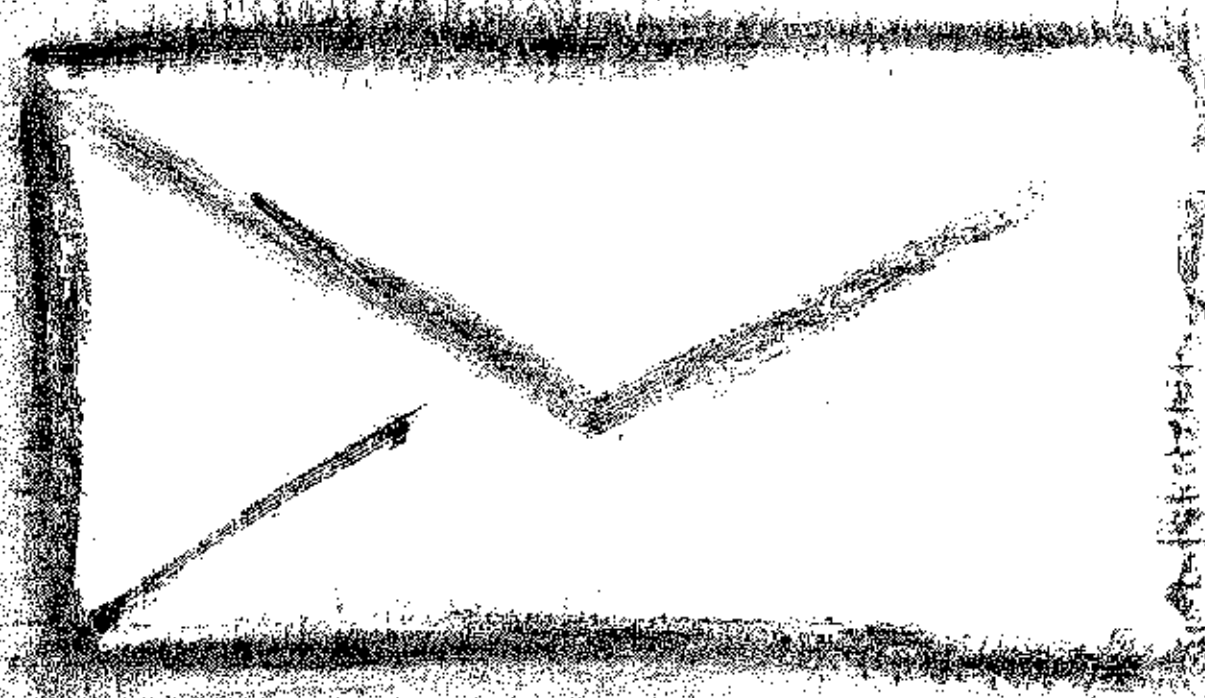


JCKSLIPS

OUTER
ENVELOPE

Designing
Direct Mail
LETTER *That* **Sells**



THEY'VE
WON

RESPONSE
FORM

SELF-MAILER

Sandra J. Blun

THE OFFER

\$12.00



9 319256 001589

Designing
Direct Mail
That **Sells**

Sandra J. Blum



NORTH LIGHT BOOKS
Cincinnati, Ohio

About the Author

Sandra J. Blum, president of Blum & Co. in Fairfield, CT, specializes in the creation and production of direct mail, sales and technical literature, and other forms of marketing communication. Blum's company is a full-service ad agency and communications consultancy that creates successful direct response programs for clients whose products range from computers to design magazines. The firm has also devised training programs for corporate clients such as Aetna, JP Morgan and Prudential/AARP.

Blum is experienced in graphic design and copywriting, and in all aspects of direct mail strategy, list selection, mailing services and print buying. She also consults on business strategies and market development. She is the coauthor of the CD-ROM *Mail Marketer: Grow Your Business Using the Mail* (a Pitney Bowes Best Practices Guide). She has also conducted business seminars to thousands nationally and internationally.



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Production Editor: Nicole R. Klungle
Designer: Angela Lennert Wilcox

Living Laboratory of Direct Mail Design That Works

OR

The Basics Are in Your Own Mailbox

Designing direct mail that gets high response and is cost-effective is not intuitive--at least, for most people. And getting a high response rate at the highest contribution to the bottom line is what great direct mail design is all about--it's the only thing that counts! Luckily, there is a sort of living laboratory surrounding us to give us help: the direct mail you see at your home or office every day from companies who mail millions of pieces. Direct mail from these folks is the result of constant testing. So if you see a mailing several times in a year--or even better, see it again and again over a few years--it means that mailing has beaten everything tested against it.



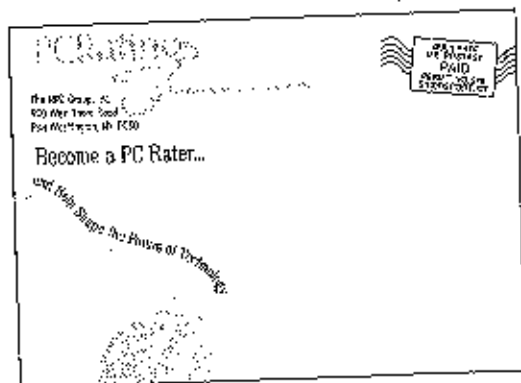
While you personally may not like them, Publisher's Clearing-house mailings look the way they do because that's what brings in the greatest number of responses for them. Subscription offers from magazines frequently come in 6" x 9" envelopes or on double postcards, **not** in #10 business envelopes, because that's what wins in tests. Business-to-business mailings for high-end products or services to upper management usually get past secretaries and mail rooms and get better response if they are more reserved, usually mailed in closed-face #10 business envelopes.

One of the reasons the elaborate 3-D packages you see in other books on creative direct mail can get high response in business-to-business mailings is that they get through screeners. And many times their creativity and memorability subtly demonstrate the superiority of the product or service being promoted. However, expensive packages that require hand processing and higher delivery costs tend to be appropriate for relatively small lists, for high-end products or services, or when it takes several months and lots of interaction to

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PC Ratings Test

YONIKIA VAMBUS, WVEA LLC

These formats were tested to find out which one pulled the highest response—a #10 window envelope that looks like "serious junk mail" versus a closed-faced businesslike offer (even more serious) versus an invitation-style look. The closed-faced envelope required a separate addressing step, so it cost more to produce and had to do quite a bit better than the other two packages to win. Results are proprietary (as they often are in direct mail), but you'll see the #10 window envelope in the mail.

Tips and Thoughts From Some of Direct Mail's Top Designers

“Direct mail design is appreciated in a world of its own. You don't see this category in design competitions in *Communication Arts* or *Graphis*. It is often regarded as junk mail. Direct mail runs the gamut from basic or poor design through beautiful visual work. Direct mail is very challenging, and a designer has to understand it and be good at it to continue a successful career in it.”

— JYL FERRIS

Ferris & Company

get the sale. In chapter eleven, we'll find out when 3-D and oversized promotions do make direct mail sense. But for the rest of the time, we'll focus more on the everyday direct mail we see around us and why it works.

Measurable Response

Simply put, direct mail is advertising mail designed to get a measurable response. And the measurable response tells you what works.

The mailer wants people to buy something, come into the business, send for more information, call, etc. How big or small the response is tells you if you sent the mail to the right people (i.e., rented the right lists, targeted the right customers). It tells you whether you made the right offer. It tells you if the way you made the offer—the copy and the design of your mailing—was appealing.

In order of importance, the success of a mailing depends on:

1. mailing lists
2. offer
3. copy and design.

But don't be misled by the order of importance. Copy and design can make a big difference in the success of a mailing. Design and copy changes can sometimes double or triple response. Doing direct mail successfully is one of those challenges where everything has got to be on target to get the greatest reward.

Copy and Design Tests

Large-volume mailers, especially consumer mailers, constantly try to beat their control. (The control is the mailing that got the best response at the highest profit per order in the last round of testing.) When the offer and the mailing lists are working, mailers will test a new package and creative concept against the control to increase response.

Another kind of testing large mailers do is try to improve a package that's working. They "play" with all the elements in the cost vs. response trade-off to try to increase profits. An example of such a test is determining if a mailing works as well without a brochure as with one. Mailers might also test to see if a change—maybe a different color of envelope or new envelope copy—will bring response back up for a winning package that is showing signs of "wear out." (If you want to know more about how testing works, don't miss chapter three!)

The fact that so much testing has been done for so long by large-volume mailers is wonderful, because by looking at what's in the mail and what gets mailed over and over, we get a set of observable results to use as a guide.

The Little Things Count

In fact, direct mailers have tested—or have opinions about—almost every element of a direct mail package, down to very small things. They know that if they use the word *you* and variations of it in the letter, they will usually get a

“**I**n direct response, the customer is the most important thing—not the product, not my design style. I submerge myself in an audience like preparing for a stage role. If I prepare correctly, I enter a project being more like the customer than myself, wearing their shoes. I can see the product or service with something like their eyes and current understandings. And see some of what they will see. This is key in my work; the more my promotional work can originate from within the customer's comfort zone and reveal product benefits from that location, the more likely I will boost response.”

— D A V I D W I S E

Was Creative Services, Ltd.

Words That Grab Attention

Announcing

Discover

Easy

Exclusive

Free

Guarantee

Health

Help

Immediately

Introducing

Know

Learn

Love

Money

New

Now

Powerful

Profits

Protect

Proven

Results

Safe

Save

Secret(s)

Today

Trust

Understand

You

Source: Storch INRA Hooper Research

Worldwide

higher response rate than if they don't. They know that letters with a postscript (PS) will generally get a higher response rate than those without. They know that the word *free* is the strongest word in the English language and will get a consumer to open the envelope.

The Response vs. Cost Challenge

It bears repeating that profitable direct mail requires getting the highest response at the lowest cost. That may sound simple, but it's not. For example, sometimes a 9" x 12" envelope will be more cost-efficient than a #10 business envelope. Why? Because the extra response the 9" x 12" envelope gets pays many times over for the extra postage cost of mailing a nonstandard envelope. It's one of those things that gets tested!

Prospects—people who are not customers and so do not have a relationship of trust with a company—generally need better offers and more exciting mailings than existing customers. Since existing customers already know and trust the company doing the mailing, they will respond to direct mail that contains fewer bells and whistles. Sometimes even multistep mailing programs are required with prospects—the company sends a first mailing to get attention and follow-ups to get a response.

In determining how much to spend in acquiring a customer, sophisticated mailers also look at something called the Lifetime Value of a customer, meaning the profitability of a customer relationship over time. If the Lifetime Value of a customer is high, they may even lose money in the short run to acquire a customer, knowing that over the life of the relationship they will make a profit on that customer.

It's Not That Easy

You may think that if direct mailers would just send you a simple, straightforward, businesslike offer instead of all that paper, you'd evaluate it and respond equally well.

Don't worry—that approach gets tested. And if it won for every offer, that's what you would see! Start collecting the mail you get (and even better, your father's, spouse's and niece's mail too) and try to categorize it by what package design works for what audience and types of products, services and offers. Separate it into business-to-business and consumer mail and get a feel for the differences. Separate it by the kind of response the mailing is trying to generate:

- a completed transaction, like ordering or joining;
- a lead (where the responder can request and receive more information); and
- traffic (to motivate the recipient to visit a store, restaurant or other business establishment).

If you aren't a born direct mail design genius, there's nothing like a collection of great examples to help you learn from the experience of others, and to show you what's working *now*.

The Direct Mail Letter

OR

"Dear Reader"

How to Turn Eye Flow Into Cash Flow

Ask any direct mail pro and they'll tell you the letter is the heart and soul of the direct mail package. And it's a unique design challenge. It must retain attributes of personal correspondence, yet function as a highly efficient selling machine.

The beauty of the letter is that it is perceived as person-to-person communication. The letter captures one of the key advantages of direct mail more than any other element in the package--the voice of one person speaking to another person, even though the minute the reader looks at it, she knows it's not from a friend, business acquaintance or her mother.

As a rule of thumb, a mailing with a letter will perform better than a mailing without one. Yet, paradoxically, almost no one reads every word of a direct mail letter.



How Do People Read Direct Mail Letters?

First, people scan the letter from top to bottom, looking for graphically emphasized words or phrases. Every time they find one they stop for about two-tenths of a second. Called fixations, these eye-stops are on headlines, subheads, characters in uppercase, underlining, bold type and phrases set off by ellipses. This skimming pattern is followed whether the letter is one page or several pages long.

Next the reader looks at the signature area and glances at the PS before returning to the top of the first page.

All this takes just seconds.

There is a little difference if the letter is personalized—that is, if the salutation uses the recipient's name instead of a generic greeting like "Dear Colleague." In that case, the reader will first look at his or her name and then check the signature at the bottom of the letter. Then the reader resumes the normal scanning pattern as described above.

Photos or illustrations in the letter tend to continually draw the eye instead of letting it move naturally through the text of the letter to the highlighted areas.

If you use photos or illustrations, take advantage of the average person's eye-flow pattern. On the first page, place the photo or illustration at the top of the page, followed by the headline.

Photos and illustrations used throughout the body of the letter should always be secondary to copy and constantly push the reader back into the text. The "directionality" of the subject matter of the art should point to important copy.

"Sight-Bite" Letter Layout

To make a direct mail letter effective, lay it out in "sight bites" of graphically emphasized copy. A sight bite might be thought of as a portion of the visual field that's easy for the eye to find in a sweep over the layout. Your goal is to make an emotional connection with the reader and to make the compelling selling points stand out.

In the best direct mail letters, paragraphs are very short—sometimes only one sentence. Important text is highlighted with ellipses, subheads in bold,

Eye-Stops: Hot Spots on the Letter

headline above salutation

signature area

PS

first few paragraphs

highlighted copy

indents, bulleted lists, underlining, all caps, etc. The letter breaks at the end of the page in the middle of a compelling sentence to get the reader to turn the page. Although it may seem like overkill to the uninitiated, you might even add instructions to the reader—even an arrow—to get him to turn the page.

To make a direct mail solicitation more effective, lay it out to make it easy to read and skim. The letter will have more selling power if paragraphs are short

and it uses bulleted lists or other techniques that put some "air" in the copy.

If you work with professional direct mail copywriters, you'll find they will more or less lay out the letter just as they want it to flow. Some are very insistent that you do not change the way their copy appears in the letter.

Sight-Bite Techniques

short paragraphs—six or

seven lines max

subheads in bold and/or color

bulleted lists

indented copy blocks

underlining important points

graphic emphasis devices—

ellipses, underlining, italics,

indented text, etc.

messages in the margin that

look like handwriting

Home Garden Letter

KIMCY BAVIS

HEREDITIC CORPORATION

Using photography in a letter immediately telegraphs that it is an advertising message, not one-to-one correspondence. So you want to be sure that photography moves readers toward response, rather than distracting them from the words. The beautiful flowers here tap into the home gardener's desire to surround herself with a lovely garden. The direction of the photographic images is toward the copy, framing the message with a decorative border that supports the words.

New! From the publishers of Better Homes and Gardens

HOME GARDEN

MAGAZINE

Finally! A brand-new magazine for the kind of gardener you want to be. Confident. Successful. And ready to try it.

Now there's HOME GARDEN, the one garden magazine that guarantees you the most satisfaction, the most beautiful success — with the least frustration.

A big, beautiful Premier Issue is reserved in your name. May we send it to you?

Dear fellow gardener,

I wish you could have been there last week came home from the garden center ...

I'd lost control.

I bought more than I needed! More than I could gardeners could ever manage in a weekend! And honest, I really overspent.

It's happened before. I want all the plants and every box or bag of anything to make them. I just go nuts.

But the moment of truth comes when I get don't know where to start. I'm overwhelmed. WHERE? HOW? WHEN?

If you, like me, can't get enough of garden could also use some straightforward answers let fly into action — take heart!

Now there's a faster, easier, more satisfying guarantee your gardening success than you ever!

Welcome to new HOME GARDEN Magazine!

Unlike any other gardening magazine, new goes beyond showing you beautiful gardens. It you how to make them happen.

Nowhere else will you find such inspiration.

Headlines: Big or Small or None

Should the direct mail letter have a headline? Yes, 90 percent of the time in some way, shape or form. One of the only times the answer is "no" is when you're trying to imitate a more formal business letter. Even then, it's possible to use a Re: or Subj: line as a headline.

Whether you use Re: lines in the letter's text font or use big type that takes up half the page, headlines are a powerful hook. Their job is to seize the reader and reel him in. They can hit the reader quickly with the strongest benefits. They can tell the reader "What's in it for me!"—either explicitly or implicitly. Or they can tease and promise at the same time.

One day years ago my writing professor handed back a story I had written, shook her head gravely, and said, "This is so bad it makes me want to quit teaching."

You can imagine what that did to my day.

And yet, this year I will make more than \$125,000.00 writing in my spare time at home.

You can too.

With a little help from...

Send no money now — we'll bill you later!

Writer's[®] DIGEST

NOW AT A PRICE SO LOW —
IT'S LIKE GETTING FIVE ISSUES
FREE!

Dear Friend,

If somewhere deep inside, you'd like to stay home and write a blockbuster...

If you'd like to turn your life's experiences, your sense of humor, your pain, your love affair, your fight with the landlord, your fantasies, your unique vision of the world...

...into filmscripts, plays, suspense novels, romance fiction, magazine articles...that pay...

If you'd like to sit face to face with today's top mystery writers, novelists, poets, screenwriters, playwrights, reporters...and learn their secrets for success...

...then read on.

Writer's Digest

DESIGN: DAVID WISE, WISE

CREATIVE SERVICES, LTD.

COPY: JOSH MARHEIMER

Headline hierarchy at work.

The size and color of each

succeeding headline emphasizes

the selling concept, leading the

reader headline by headline

into the letter. This

letter accompanied the

"BLOCKBUSTER" offer shown

on page 48.

Who Decides on Headline Design?

Well, just like any other direct mail project, it's the designer ... or the writer ... or the copywriter and the designer. Some direct mail copywriters just hand over the package. Some dictate exactly what they want.



**Take a moment for this little quiz.
Check off the incidents that have
happened to you or someone you know?**

- Your car breaks down and needs to be towed to a service station
- A snow storm sends you away from home overnight
- Your car won't start because of a dead battery
- You've got a flat tire and you're stranded in your Sunday best
- Your car is locked and you left the keys in the ignition
- An postal clerk has your car far away from home
- Your car runs out of gas and you're miles from a gas station
- Your car is badly stuck in snow, mud or sand

If you checked any of the above, please read on.

Dear Sears Cardholder,

If you're like me and most other Canadian drivers, you've run into most of the above problems at least once. And some probably more often than just once. They can be very expensive.

Now, for only pennies a day, you can protect yourself from the financial frustration of expensive but inevitable situations like these. For just \$3.30 a month, you can join the Sears Auto Club and not have to worry about those unavoidable emergency expenses.

You certainly can't prevent these unexpected events from happening. But you can make sure you don't suffer financially when they do. You can give yourself peace of mind.

Towing, battery boosts, flat tire changes, unplanned hotel and food expenses, and many more. Unforeseen expenses annoy us and can set back the most careful financial planning. Join the Sears Auto Club and when the unexpected happens, we're there to help you out.

**Here are just some of the ways you're protected
when you're a member of the Sears Auto Club**

First of all you'll have the security of one of the most comprehensive emergency road protection programs available. You'll find help in just about any situation imaginable.

- **Towing:** If you have any kind of breakdown, just choose the service provider you like and we'll pay you go. You'll be reimbursed up to \$50 per tow and we'll cover you up to 5 times a year.
- **Battery Boost:** No matter how often you get through a winter without needing one. And if your car won't start after the boost, we'll still pay for the tow.
- **Flat Tire:** They happen to everyone, but as a Sears Auto Club member, at least you won't have to worry about the expense of getting it changed.
- **Keys Locked in Car:** An easy mistake, but as a club member, you won't have to pay the consequences. We'll send you up to \$50 to cover the cost of the locksmith.
- **Gas Out of Gas:** It doesn't happen too often, but isn't it nice to know we'll pay up to \$25 to have gas delivered to your car.
- **Stuck and Require Winching:** If you're stuck in snow, sand or mud we'll reimburse you to get yourself winched out.

**Plus our Trip Interruption Benefits
can really save your day**

One of the worst times for things to go wrong is when you're miles away from home. That's when expenses can really add up. And that's why we protect you with our Trip Interruption Benefits.

- If you're stranded due to an accident, we'll reimburse you up to \$300 to cover rental cars, meals and lodging and commercial transportation.
- If hazardous weather forces you to find emergency accommodations away from home, we'll cover you up to \$150 for lodging, food, phone calls and personal necessities.
- You can use our **Emergency Travel Expense** — FREE. Tell us where you want to go, if you want the scenic route or the most direct route and we'll send you an auto trip kit, with marked maps and traffic information.
- We'll supply a \$1,000 reward if your car is stolen. Plus, we'll give you partial reimbursement for up to 10 days of commercial vehicle transportation.
- We'll look after your legal fees up to \$700 if you need a lawyer in court. And if you have a problem while in the U.S.A., we'll even provide up to \$15,000 bail bond.

I don't have room here to list all the member benefits. Simply put, they add up to complete peace of mind for you, wherever and whenever you're travelling in Canada or the United States.

**The Sears Auto Club gives you peace of mind
plus a whole lot more:
A FREE auto inspection worth up to \$50**

You're a Sears customer, and we know you appreciate value. Well, here's value you won't believe. An exclusive Sears Auto Club benefit — a free auto inspection worth up to \$50.

When it comes to automobiles, a little preventative maintenance can save big repair bills. So we give you this free auto inspection to help you catch the minor problems before they become major — and to help make your peace of mind complete.

This benefit alone is worth more than your annual membership fee. Now that's value!

**Sears Auto Club gives you the freedom
to always choose the service provider you want**

Some auto clubs force you to use only the services that they specify. That restriction can often be a serious inconvenience.

Especially when you need a hotel on a sub-zero day and all their members are trying to call the same numbers — and getting the same busy signal. When they finally do get through, who knows how long they'll wait until help actually arrives.

We make it a lot easier for you. The Sears Auto Club lets you call whomever you like. Fast, easy and much more convenient for you.

**Mail your acceptance by the deadline and
you're protected for up to \$300 from the day you mail it**

Check the expiry date on your temporary membership card. Send your acceptance back to us by the date and you'll have the added protection of the enclosed Traction Club Reimbursement Form.

PS: Everybody Reads the PS

And lots of people read it first, which is why so many successful direct mail letters have one, even letters directed to upper management. Because the PS is so powerful, the copy is used like a major headline. The PS can recap the offer, highlight a big benefit or persuade readers to look at the rest of the mailing. Or all three. The PS can:

- add urgency (“limited time offer”);
- encourage action (“call your research consultant today”);
- focus on any free gifts, bonuses or discounts (“*The Insider’s Report*, yours free with . . .”); and
- give assurance (“100 percent money-back guarantee, no questions asked”).

Your job as designer is simply to let the PS stand out and do its job.

No Other Face but Courier (or Prestige)

The rule of thumb for direct mail letters is simple: typeface and size of type should support easy reading and easy skimming.

Even though businesses these days use standard office typefaces like Times, Palatino or even Helvetica for their letters, many experts still believe direct mail letters should only be set in Courier or Prestige. The original idea was to make the letter look as if it were typed on a typewriter by a real live person instead of being mass-produced. Of course, the typewriter is long gone, but these typefaces have become traditional for direct mail letters.

If you’re not a direct mail purist, or working for one, Times Roman (or the PC version Times New Roman) is an acceptable choice because it is today’s standard business office letter typeface and it is a very readable serif face.

Using a sans serif typeface for the body text of a direct mail letter is taking a big risk. Sans serifs are not widely used for letters, so they cause people to stop for a second, feeling slightly perplexed. Sans serif typeface legibility is also sometimes less than optimum, and you want people to be able to skim your letter and never stop, feel irritated or wonder what character that was!

To support easy reading, the body copy of a letter should be an absolute minimum of 9-point and rarely more than 12-point type. The leading should use word processor defaults. The idea is to look like someone used an office or home computer to generate the letter.

Archive Subscription Mailing Letter

MARK CHEUNG and BETH CROWELL
CHEUNG/CROWELL DESIGN

This package has been the center for ARCHIVE for more than five years. The letter, directed to graphic arts professionals, breaks a lot of direct mail design rules. But it doesn't break the biggest rule: Know your audience. Know their priorities, their likes and dislikes, their hot spots.

The letter is small, like a note, and says, "This won't take a lot of your busy time to read." It is very visual and it says humor in a way that reflects the style of the magazine. It's set in sans serif.

But the rules of salesmanship are there: The headline delivers the big benefits and entices. You can figure out the offer in a split second. There's a great professional discount, an emphasis on "free," a "Send No Money Now" reassurance. Standard direct mail wrapped in a different package.



GRATISHEFT
36% RABATT FÜR ABONNENTEN.
EIN EINMALIGES ANGEBOT
SEHEN SIE SELBST! WUFF

FREE ISSUE
36% DISCOUNT
A UNIQUE OFFER
SEE FOR YOURSELF! WOW!

Dear Creative Professional,

Quelle Bonne Affaire! (What a Deal!)

You'll see the BEST, NEWEST, FRESHEST, OUT-THERE advertising in the world in Lőrzer's International ARCHIVE magazine.

Hundreds of ideas in every issue from the U.K., France, Holland, Spain, Brazil, Germany, Australia, Singapore... everywhere great work appears. Now



site ads, exciting photography, the best in TV commercials, sensational posters, new visual concepts. ARCHIVE is a lifeline when you're up against a deadline. It's a great idea file. And you'll keep in touch with what's going on all over the world.

You'll discover it in ARCHIVE first. Long before it's recognized at the awards show, long before it hits the airwaves... or anywhere else.

Inspiration Gratulata (Take a Free Gift!)

Get your FREE ISSUE and see for yourself! Top creative directors, copywriters, photographers, graphic designers and agencies have subscribed to ARCHIVE for years.

Take a look. You'll agree with them that ARCHIVE is a secret weapon in a shrinking world. Now, with this great offer, you can get in on their secret. So fast, lots of our subscribers end up having ARCHIVE sent to their homes... it somehow 'd' appears' in the office.

Over 10,000 New Ideas a Year

ARCHIVE's amazing idea file. It's organized into more than 30 categories: Agencies, Automotive, Beverages, Children, Cigarettes/Cigars, Corporate Identity, Food, House & Garden, Environment, Pharmaceuticals, Retailers, Services, Sports, Travel & Leisure... to name a few.

Then there's the CREATORS section at the end of every issue. You'll see the great ads or campaigns that made history. Timeless, brilliant and still effective — another wonderful source of ideas. And it's a beautiful magazine! First class typography. Silky, rich paper. Gorgeous full color.

→ Advertising Agency	Free Sample
Creative Director	Free Sample
Copywriter	Free Sample
Graphic Designer	Free Sample
Photographer	Free Sample

You'll always know who did the work. ARCHIVE identifies the creative talent. Inexpensive. We give credit where credit is due.

You'll always know what the ads say. We translate it for you.

Meet a World Renowned Creative Genius in Every Issue

Meet them. Straight from the files of: Paul Arden, Creative Director, Saatchi & Saatchi, London. Leslie Okator, Los Angeles. Washington Clement, Founder W/Brand. Alan Wicks, Art Director, Lowe Howard-Spink, London. Mike Tesch, Art Director, L&L Partners, L&A. Ted To Marcus, São Paulo, Brazil and Juan Marín, Muncie, Castagnone, Spain.

Their lessons are in-depth, never boring and quite extraordinary. You get inside the world's top creative minds — and only in ARCHIVE!



Formats and Paper Choices

The most common paper choice for a direct mail letter is a 60# white offset. Black type on white paper is easiest to read, and since getting people to read is what we're after, that's what you see most often.

If you're trying to imitate note paper or invitation styles, you might want to use beige, grey or ivory papers. If you're mailing to an audience for whom environmental awareness is important, it may be worth the extra money to use recycled papers. But if you're trying to drive your cost per thousand down, this may not be an option.

When you're selecting your paper, don't forget to take weight into account. If you are mailing at First-Class rates, you'll want to keep the mailing weight

below one ounce. Also, if you are printing on two sides, remember to take paper opacity into consideration.

Letter size usually is determined by the envelope size and the common sizes of personal and business stationery.

A common format is the four-page booklet letter, which lays the letter out on at least three of the four pages. This format supports long copy development, keeps people reading, and perhaps even feels like a story.

One-page, single-sided (short and sweet) letters are what work most often in business-to-business mailings designed to get leads—i.e., get people to say they are interested in more information or otherwise identify themselves as someone to be contacted again. If you were to design a multipage letter for a business audience, you might use separate sheets, printed on one side. In other words, you would imitate one-to-one business correspondence.

Most direct mail letters are two-color—black and a spot color. If you use four-color photography in the letter, it's okay to use a coated stock, but remember that coated stock for a letter really says this is a "commercial" letter, not a personal one. If the letter is wonderful and effective and needs four-color reproduction, then that's no disadvantage.

Back to Your Mailbox

In the final analysis, the design of a direct mail letter is only great if it generates response. It can't be emphasized enough that the best way to learn what works is to start collecting the direct mail you get repeatedly. When you see a mailing more than once, it probably means it's the control—that is, it has won against other mailings that were tested against it. And that's wonderful information when you're new to direct mail. You don't have to search out what works. It will come to you!

The Response Device

OR

YES, Please rush me . . .

Response devices in direct mail are anything a responder uses to mail back, fax back, phone back or E-mail back. They include mail order forms, reply cards, pledge envelopes and a myriad of other formats.

Many experts think the response device is the most important component of a mailing. Although it can't deeply interest readers in your proposition and it doesn't explain the benefits in detail, the response device is the decision pivot point. It's the point of transition from solicitation on your part to acceptance and response on the part of the reader. So if you don't have an effective response device, none of the other components can function at all.

Think of the response device as the "closer" in the sales process.




Use the Attention-Getting Nature of the Response Device

Many people go to the response device first to get a quick-and-easy summary of the offer. Readers subconsciously use the response device to see if the mailing is worth looking at further. Some people even respond right then, without looking at anything else.

There's another interesting reason people look for the response device. People give surprising attention to their own names and addresses, even examining them closely for misspellings or any other kind of mistake. It's a form of entertainment, a game. And the place they're most likely to find their own name and address in a mailing is on the response device.

So the response device is a real magnet. It's the one component in the package that will show the greatest impact on results when you improve it. And it's also the component where the most damaging mistakes are made.




The next step is in your hands...



Tell us your decision by affixing the orange peel-off sticker above in one of the three boxes on your right.


©1987 by Ted Nixoler
1144-0000-100-1

'Free Enrollment' Form

<p>"I'm ready!" I'm ready to take the plunge. Please send my free trial issue of <i>Starting Your Own Business</i> and send me Sections 1 and 2 for a 15-day trial period under the terms set forth in the box below.</p> <p><small>SEND TO: []</small></p> 	<p>"I'm nervous!" I'm sorry. I need to know more before starting my own business. Please allow me the opportunity to receive your free trial issue.</p> <p><small>SEND TO: []</small></p> 	<p>"I'll think it over!" I'll think about it as my mind gets some help in by reading the Sections 1 and 2 for a 15-day trial period. I'll let you know if I can think of any way to make my business succeed. I'll share the results of your response and my thinking.</p> <p><small>SEND TO: []</small></p> 
---	---	--

NOTE: "Starting Your Own Business: 13 Steps to Success" is yours to keep FREE -- even if you decide not to continue.

Don't do anything rash. Consider alternatives. But if your dreams and your boss's methods don't agree, this may be the time to...



KISS YOUR JOB GOODBYE!

Kiss Your Job GOODBYE!
 DESIGN: TED NIXOLER, TED NIXOLER DESIGN
 COPY: ROBERT MATHEO
 The envelope and the reply form photography really work together in this package. You can almost see the hand moving the sticker to the "I'm ready" box. The reply form is designed to emphasize the low risk and says "Come on. What are you waiting for? You can't lose... and you may just be able to kiss your job goodbye." Note the NOTE—the free gift is promoted here right above the label.

Make Sure It's Easy to Find

Your first instinct might be to hide the response device, to make sure it's not seen until after the letter or the brochure because only then will the reader understand what it is you're trying to sell or get her to do. And because most people are reluctant to sell strongly, you might be tempted to underplay the response device. Wrong.

Since the response device is the pivotal point in getting a person to move from consideration to decision, it should be emphasized.

Make the response device do its job. Don't be afraid of soliciting, or drawing attention to the sell copy. In direct mail, it's key to solicit and be directive. Highlight the copy that urges people to respond now.

Clearly identify the response device as the way to reply. You can make it more important by giving it a valuable name. Here are some suggested labels:

Reservation Certificate

Free Trial Acceptance

Free Gift Voucher

Special Savings Voucher

No-Risk Trial Certificate

Reservation Card

Discount Offer Form

Professional Courtesy Reply

Request Card

Reply to Your Invitation

RSVP

Charter Offer Order Form

Another technique is to make the response device look valuable by designing it to resemble a stock certificate or an award, or by using the green of U.S. currency as an accent color.

Tip

Do the tap test yourself. Tap your reply envelope on the right, left and bottom sides to make sure the response card doesn't shift and the clearances are maintained.

Use symbols of "value" like certificate borders, starbursts with the word "Free," and attention-getters like boxes pointing out the time limits on the offer, official-looking computer type for codes or certificate numbers, and rubber stamp type styles for copy like "RUSH" and "Limited Time Offer."

Bright colors, exciting design, photos, paper stock different from any other element in the package, bold type—they all can make the response device stand out. Except for upscale financial mailings, fund-raising mailings, very businesslike mailings to executives or mailings that are trying to look official, the response device can be visually exciting and energizing. Just make sure the visual excitement doesn't interfere with the responder reading what he needs to read and writing where he needs to write.

Country Home

Folk Crafts

HANCY DAYS.

HEREDITH CORPORATION

Find all the response generators . . . YES! Rush me. Now!

Mail Today, Absolutely

Guaranteed. Send no money

now. The token slot is a classic

Heredith technique—the

responder is involved physically

and psychologically by inserting

the token into the slot. It is an

act of commitment but the

emphasis is on what you are

getting free, reserved especially

for you.

**A Very Special
Charter Subscriber/Premier
Issue Offer Just For You!**

Say "Yes" Now To...

Country Home

Folk Crafts

MAGAZINE

**AND MAY WE ABSOLUTELY GUARANTEE
YOUR SATISFACTION — 100%?**

If new FOLK CRAFTS Magazine doesn't delight you . . . if it doesn't enhance your talents, increase your skills, satisfy your passion for (antiquated) handicrafts . . . just let us know at any time during your charter year. We'll promptly cancel your subscription and refund your money — all of it!

Just remove this token and place in pocket at right.

Detach and mail your Savings Certificate today!

NEW!

Folk Crafts

HANCY DAYS

HEREDITH CORPORATION

1716 LUSK BLVD. • ST. LOUIS, MO 63103

THIS PREMIER ISSUE RESERVED FOR:

Country Home Folk Crafts Magazine

**SEND NO MONEY NOW!
We'll bill you later.**

Charter Subscriber Savings Certificate

Yes! Rush me the Premier Issue of new FOLK CRAFTS Magazine and enter my charter subscription (one full year 6 issues) for only \$19.97. I understand that's \$3.00 off the regular subscription price, and my satisfaction is absolutely guaranteed . . . 100%.

Place Token Here

Mail Today!

Subscription prices subject to change.

BA

Country Home Folk Crafts Magazine • 1716 Lusk Blvd. • St. Louis, Mo 63103

Make It Easy to Respond

The response device should be easy to fill out. Your design should make it crystal clear how to respond—so easy a ten-year-old child understands it. It should be very directive. Tell people exactly what to do.

Ideally, the responder's name, address and other information should already be printed on it, because you want to make responding as easy as possible.

If the responder has to fill in any information, make the spaces big enough to write in without resorting to tiny, cramped handwriting. Don't annoy people who are trying to respond. Likewise, choose paper stock that can be written on without a struggle—uncoated stocks with white or light backgrounds are usually best.

Find out if the response card is going to be scanned when it is received. If it is, be sure each area of information can be read by the scanner and that the paper stock can be handled.

If the response form has to be lengthy (as with credit card applications), organize the information with banners, numbering and other graphic devices

EATON and Petro-Canada RON MARSHAK, RON MARSHAK DIRECT MARKETING

Listing the benefits on the reply is one way to boost response. Many times the reader goes to the response device first to get a summary of the offer. And if the benefits are repeated on the form along with the instructions to respond, you are already starting the reader on the road to responder. In fact, some times that's all that's needed.

Tip

Looking at the color red quickens the heart rate slightly and releases adrenaline into the bloodstream. That's why it's good for response devices.

Acceptance Form • Pre-Approved Card

You have been selected and pre-approved for a new Petro-Canada Card.

Simply complete and mail this acceptance form by JANUARY 31, 1994 and you'll receive your Petro-Canada Card and credit limit of up to \$1000 in savings.

YES! I accept your invitation. Please send me my new Petro-Canada Card and credit limit of up to \$1000 in savings. I hereby authorize Petro-Canada to debit my account for the amount of my new Petro-Canada Card.

Name

Address

City

Mr. John E. Smith
75 Mutual Street
Toronto, ON
M5B 2P9

I hereby authorize Petro-Canada to debit my account for the amount of my new Petro-Canada Card. I hereby authorize Petro-Canada to debit my account for the amount of my new Petro-Canada Card.

Please Complete:

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Phone

Signature

Date

When you receive your Petro-Canada Card, please activate it by the end of the month. If you do not activate it by the end of the month, your Petro-Canada Card will be voided. If you do not activate it by the end of the month, your Petro-Canada Card will be voided.

Please mail your acceptance today and receive a \$5 credit the first time you use your new Petro-Canada Card.

You'll also receive coupons worth...

- ✓ \$10 off Exterior Car Wash & Waxing Package
- ✓ Free Car Wash 200 Point Survey & Permanent Condition Check (valued at \$9.95)
- ✓ \$10 off car wash & Lube, Oil Change & Filter
- ✓ \$10 off other major Petro-Canada Services
- ✓ \$10 off car wash & Lube, Oil Change & Filter

a total of over \$100 in savings.

Plus the convenience of a Petro-Canada Card. Don't miss out. Mail your acceptance today!

Do it

INTERACTIVE


(MARKET RESEARCH THAT IS)

Suffering from sloooooow market research???

Get your new products to market faster

Discover the speed and power of NFO Interactive - online, real time market research

See it in action and receive a FREE GWT worth up to \$1,000



YES! I want to find out how I can get my products to market faster, easier and more profitably. Please have a consultant call me to arrange a no-obligation appointment in my office so I can see NFO Interactive in action.

Just for looking, I'll get my choice of a free question on NFO//registry worth \$750 or a free copy of your overview of online shoppers worth \$1,000.

Not right now, I'm interested but not right now. Please keep me on your mailing list.

No, I'm not interested.

Name.....

Company.....

Title.....

Address.....

City..... State..... Zip.....

Phone..... Fax..... E-mail.....

NFO Interactive Lead Generator

MÓNICA XARHOS, NENA LLC
 "YES!" "Not Right Now." Or
 "No!" Sometimes direct mailers
 offer a "NO!" reply option.
 People who return a "NO" are
 actually good: they want to re-mail
 to or keep on the database.
 After all, they cared enough to
 respond, indicating some
 psychological level of interest.

that make it look like it will take very little time to fill out. Make the form as self-explanatory as possible.

The response device should fit without folding in the Business or Courtesy Reply Envelope. Avoid any other inconvenience.

Make It Easy to Read

Use easy-to-read type for the acceptance statement, instructions, options and any benefit copy. If your target audience is senior citizens, make the point size a tad larger than what you'd use for a younger audience.

If you have several acceptance options, set the option you want people to choose in larger type than less desirable options.

If you have to include legalese or disclaimer copy, separate it from the acceptance and benefit copy. Make it look as unintrusive and friendly as possible.

YES! Have a YES! Acceptance Statement

Remember when you're designing the response device that its job is to make a forceful statement of acceptance.

The acceptance statement summarizes the principal rationale for responding. It makes the statement of acceptance, encourages action and includes a major benefit. That's why direct mailers use the word "Yes!" standing out, followed by a supporting thought that summarizes the key reasons why the offer is being accepted (for instance, "YES! Please reserve my free copy of *Thin for Life* and rush me . . .").

**Nightingale
Conant**

7309 North Lehigh Ave. Niles, IL 60714 • Call Toll-Free 1-800-525-9000 • Fax Toll-Free 1-800-667-9198

ADVANCE NOTICE FREE TRIAL OFFER

FREE-CATALOG ANNOUNCEMENT. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS REQUESTED.
PLEASE LET ME KNOW YOUR ANSWER BEFORE MAY 27TH, 1997

CUSTW NCB06265834 DJQJEDA

Eileen Kelly
St. Joseph Hospital
703 Main St.
Paterson NJ 07653-2621
|||||

Dear Eileen Kelly,

Mr. Conant asked me to send you the enclosed free trial offer because, based on what you've purchased from us in the past, he believes you'll be interested in this new, breakthrough audiocassette program from Brian Tracy. It's not available in the catalog yet.

You, along with a select number of our customers, have been invited to be among the first to sample an exciting breakthrough audiocassette program from Brian Tracy. There is no charge. I've already arranged that you'll receive the program free for 30 days. If, after listening to it, you decide that you don't care for it, just send it back. It won't cost you a penny.

But if you'd like to keep it, just pay the invoice that comes with it. You're price is only \$59.95 plus shipping, handling, and applicable sales tax.

Vic's special report explains everything. Please read it and let me know whether you're interested in participating in this 30-day free trial. There's no order form. To get your free trial copy, just check off the "YES" box below and return this page to my attention.

- YES**, I accept Vic's free offer to listen to Brian Tracy's new audiocassette program, "The Luck Factor," free for 30-days.
- NO THANK YOU**. I will not have time during the coming month to participate. Please give my free-trial copy to someone else.

Please fax this page back to me toll-free at 1-800-667-9198, (no cover page needed), or use the enclosed reply envelope. Or, if you wish to call our toll-free order desk at 1-800-525-9000, just mention your claim number below.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,
Maggie Lewis
Maggie Lewis,
Assistant to Vic Conant

ENCLOSURES

cc: Vic Conant, Gene Sengelhack, Sara Pond, file

FREE OFFER CLAIM NO.

DJQJEDA - 006265834

1539 07

The Luck Factor Audiocassette Program

TED WIKLER
TED WIKLER DESIGN

The writer/designer wanted to draw people in and make this look like a special, small-quantity mailing. He wanted the reader to feel there really is a person whose job is affected by this mailing, who cares about it. So the reply form looks like a letter from the "Assistant to Vic Conant" for his Advance Notice-Free Trial Offer. The office format—"ENCLOSURES" and "cc"—make the reply form feel less like direct mail and more "real." The "Free Offer Claim No." draws the eye, while conveying credibility. Turn the page over and there are handwritten instructions from "Maggie" on how to fax back your reply.

Make the design focus people on the act of responding:

- Use a **YES!** acceptance statement with a prechecked box in front of the "YES!"
- Provide check boxes for options.
- Use dingbats—pointing fingers, telephones, scissors—and icons to telegraph how to respond.
- Get people engaged with involvement devices—like peel-off stickers from some other part of the mailing to move to the response device.
- Make the response form look inviting and easy to fill out.
- Emphasize the toll-free number, fax number, phone number and/or mail-back address.

The response device also offers acceptance options, such as method of payment or expressions of interest that don't go as far as accepting the offer ("Keep me on your mailing list" or "Send more information").

Codes on the Reply Form

Direct mailers want to track results, so often key codes are printed along with the recipient's address to identify what list the name came from. Sometimes there's a customer code too. These codes are ink-jetted or otherwise printed at the same time as the name and address.

If there are several versions of the mailing, say an offer test, the mailing will be coded for the offer. Occasionally, there are different toll-free numbers to call for different versions of the mailing.

When to Use a Separate Component

In envelope mailings, a separate component is preferred. You can save money by not having a separate response device—using a tear-off reply on the letter or printing the response device in the brochure, for example—but most of the time you'll run the risk of lower response.

In self-mailers and magalogs, the reply is not separate, of course. It's usually on the last page.

Business Reply Mail: Envelopes and Cards

If you ask the responder to go find a stamp and put it on the reply envelope or card, you interrupt the act of responding and may lower response. If you want payment with the order, credit card information or any private information (like phone numbers or E-mail addresses), a Business Reply Envelope (BRE) is a necessity. You don't want a potential responder to decide not to respond simply because you didn't supply a BRE.

So advise your clients to use Business Reply Mail (BRM)—that is, provide postage-paid reply cards or envelopes. To use BRM, you have to apply to the USPS for the permit and pay all applicable fees. Small-volume or infrequent direct mail users might go for the option of paying postage and fees for each returned piece of reply mail when it is delivered to them. However, for high volumes and to pay the lowest rate, a debit account established with the USPS makes more sense.

A unique ZIP+4 code is issued to each BRM permit holder. A camera-ready bar code positive is available at no charge from the Post Office. The bar code must be placed in the bar code clear zone in the lower right corner (4¼ inches long from the right edge, ¾ inch high from the bottom edge) of the envelope. It cannot be placed below or above the address block as it can be on regular mail.

A Facing Identification Mark (FIM) is required on Business Reply Mail. The FIM is a pattern of vertical bars printed in the upper right of the envelope just to the left of printed indicia. It's needed as an orientation mark for automated facing and cancellation equipment. You don't have to design the FIM yourself—a camera-ready positive is available at no charge from the post office.

The USPS recommends black ink on a white background for the FIM and the bar code, but you can use other colors. According to the USPS, Pantone Matching System (PMS) ink colors with a minimum of one-part black are acceptable.

Light background colors for Business Reply Mail (cards and envelopes) are safe. Forget fluorescent stock. It interferes with the functioning of USPS address and barcode reading equipment.

Tip

Self-mailers used for reply mail cannot be stapled closed when returned, whether you're using BRM or not. You have to design them with continuous gum strips or glue spots to keep them closed, or instruct the responders to tape them shut.

In Case You're Wondering

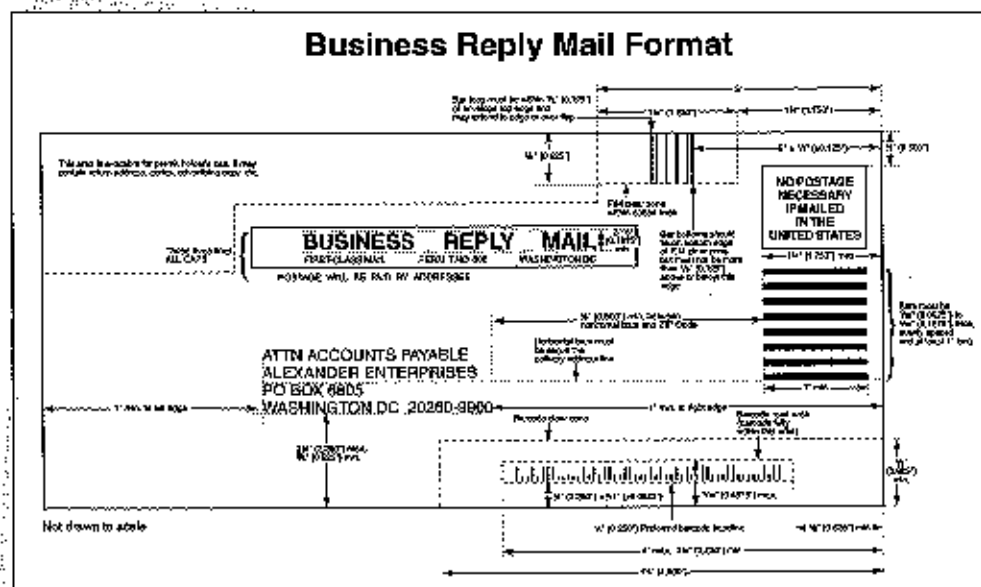
If you have questions or concerns about your BRM, take it to a local USPS Business Center and get a Postal Service mailpiece design analyst to review it. Business Centers were established to help mailers (especially local businesses trying to do direct mail) meet USPS regulations. You can get a list of them from your local post office. You can also just ask for help at your local post office. Letter-shops know this stuff too.

The Tap Test for Outgoing Window Envelopes

Design the reply device so it fits snugly if you use a window outer-envelope. Remember, the USPS can perform the "tap test" at any point in handling your mail. All the tap test means is that if your mailing is tapped on the right, left or bottom, the bar code and address block can't shift and end up outside the required minimum $\frac{1}{8}$ inch clearance to the sides and .04 inch to the top and bottom of the window edges. If a single piece fails, the whole mailing can lose all automation discounts.

Help From the Postal Service

The *Domestic Mail Manual* (DMM) gives you all the preparation and the application procedures for Business Reply Mail, but it's not that easy to read. There is also a USPS publication called *Designing Reply Mail* that gives you the information on preparing Business Reply Mail—cards, self-mailers or envelopes. Also available from the USPS is a template you can use to be sure the FIM (Facing Identification Mark) and other information is placed correctly.



Stubs and L-Shapes

That brings us to tear-off stubs on the response device. The stub can have a double function. First, it ensures the response device will be large enough to fit snugly in the outer envelope and not move out of position (so that you'll pass the tap test). Then, when the responder peels out or cuts out the reply part of the response device, it's exactly the right size to fit in the BRE. (Having to fold the reply form to fit in the reply envelope is considered to be an irritant to responders and therefore likely to lower response.)

The other thing stubs do is promote action and give your responder something to keep. Plus, if the offer might qualify as a tax deduction, you can promote that benefit on the stub—tell the responder to tear it off and keep it for tax records.

A variation on the utilitarian tear-off stub is the L-shaped response device. It's hard to miss an L-shaped response form in the envelope. And that's exactly why it works. It gets attention and invites hand-

Try Designing the Response Device First

This can be really hard to do, but an excellent exercise is to create your response device first and then design the rest of the package around it. The other pieces in a mailing package are designed to get people to take action on the response device, so lead them to it visually and psychologically.

You have a Premier Issue Reserved
Name. May it be yours?

MY FULL MONEY-BACK Guarantee
If for any reason I am disappointed in my subscription, I will receive a prompt and unqualified refund for all my money.

REMOVE THIS TOKEN AND INSERT IN SLOT ON R.S.V.P. CARD AT RIGHT.

NEW! **Home Garden & Landscape** **Magazine**

BURR! Only in many Premier Issues are printed. An easy postmark guarantees you won't be illegal!

THIS PREMIER ISSUE RESERVED FOR:

Home Garden & Landscape Magazine

NANCY DAVIS, HENNING CORPORATION

L-shaped response cards (and variations on the theme) attract by their odd shape. They invite handling. And peeling out the response card is a very satisfying physical act. No doing a kids puzzle; more fun than work. With the classic L-shape, the part the responder returns is torn away from the ascender. This allows the response card part to fit in the reply envelope while the length of the ascender allows the address and bar code to be placed properly in the outer window envelope.

Home Garden and Landscape
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R.S.V.P. CHARTER INVITATION

SAVE \$5.00!

Yes! Rush my big, beautiful Premier Issue of new Better Homes and Gardens HOME GARDEN & LANDSCAPE Magazine. I'll become a Charter Subscriber and pay just \$49.97 plus \$3.00 postage and handling for one year (6 issues) — that's a full \$5.00 savings off what others will pay at the regular nine-year price!

Send no money, but do mail today!

Charter Subscriptions can be offered for only so long.

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ling. The ascender part of the L is used to list benefits, promote action, be visually exciting. The horizontal section is the response device and gets torn off and sent back. The L-shape requires a die cut and isn't as cheap as a plain rectangular card to produce, so like all things in direct mail, the L-shaped response device has to pay its way.

Backside Philosophy

There are three schools of thought on printing on the back of the response form: Yes! No! and It Depends.

The "no" school thinks it distracts people in the act of responding. To quote direct mail guru John Klingel, "Anything that slows response lowers response."

The "yes" school thinks, "Here's another opportunity to sell." Besides, you don't know which side the reader will see first, so you ought to use both.

The "It Depends" school analyzes each mailing and decides if using both sides works for the audience, the product, the type of mailing, etc.

If you're not that experienced and want to be absolutely safe, forget the copy on the backside of the card. Make the front strong and clear and let it do its job.

Attention, Desire, Action

To sum up, the response device has to:

- get attention;
- sum up the offer; and
- close the sale, i.e., inspire the desired response.

And it should be able to "close" on its own. The reader shouldn't have to look at anything else in the mailing to know this is a great offer and here's how to respond—now.

Check Out Your Response Device

- Is it easy to understand?
- Is it easy to find?
- Is there a clear statement of the offer?
- Does it highlight the benefits?
- Does it encourage action?
- Does it spell out how to respond?
- Does it highlight the guarantee?
- Are price and terms clear?
- Is the sales tax spelled out?
- Are shipping and handling costs indicated?
- Is delivery time stated?
- Are time limits stated?
- Are any rules and regulations handled positively?
- Is the return address included on reply form?
- Is phone, fax and E-mail information included?
- Does it fit in the reply envelope easily? Without folding?
- Did you ask for change of name and address?
- If possible, are name and address of responder already filled in?
- Is postage-paid return provided if payment with order, credit information or confidential information is requested?