



Want Better Direct Mail? Check These 5 Things

When designing a direct mail piece, have you ever thought about how the recipient's eye travels around it? Understanding this basic reader behavior can help you improve your results, even if your design is already working for you.

Let's start with a simple envelope. Where do people's eyes go first? How can you use this knowledge to improve the impact of your piece?

1. Return address. You might think that recipients look at their name and address first, but you'd be wrong. Recipients almost always start with this area of the envelope. Do they recognize your business name? Are you a business they already have a relationship with? If you are a known brand, consider using colored text or adding a logo, so the recipient recognizes you from a distance.

2. Recipient name and address. It sounds simple, but too many marketers have mistakes in their databases that ruin the user experience before the piece is ever read. Get the recipient's name right. Ensure all of the data is in the correct field so you don't send mail intended for Lt. Col. John Smith, USMC (Ret.) to USMC Ret. Yes, it's happened.

3. Postage area. Even the type of postage you use has an impact on your results. For example, people are more likely to open your mailing if they see a first-class stamp. However, it's essential to balance postage type with volume, too.

4. Teaser copy (if desired). The outside of the envelope is the first place people are exposed to your message, so take advantage of it. Teaser copy can be preprinted or personalized during the printing process.

5. Back side. When the recipient takes in the mail, which side of the envelope will they see first? There is no way to predict. So include hints, teasers, and calls to action on the back side of the mailer, too.

The outside of your envelope is the recipients' first exposure to your marketing message, so make sure you've optimized every corner of your envelope. Studies show you have three seconds or less before the recipient keeps or trashes your mail piece and 30 seconds or less for them to decide to open it. Make the most of that time.

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