

By Pat Friesen



Rev Up Your Response

Test bells and whistles, gadgets, and gizmos

While I'm not an advocate of adding extraneous elements to mailings for the sake of being clever, I've learned to appreciate the response-generating value of bells and whistles, gadgets, and gizmos when used appropriately.

I was schooled in the fundamentals of direct marketing while a senior writer at Fingerhut, and it was drilled into me that you never add anything to a control package unless it has the potential to increase response significantly. Moreover, that increase must more than pay for itself.

That's why I recommend testing such tactics first. See how successfully they: 1) grab your reader's attention and help your mail piece stand out in the stack; 2) increase getting your mail piece opened and read; and 3) support your

benefit statements while increasing response. Here are some examples of what to test and why.

Grab Your Reader's Eye

Holograms and Lenticular Imaging.

Don't hide these special effects inside your mailing. Maximize the bang you get for your buck by highlighting these images on a postcard or the outer panel of a self-mailer. Think of creative ways to incorporate these ever-changing images into your mailing. For instance, a favorite mailing of mine is a conference announcement for a meeting in Cancun, Mexico. The hologram shifts between images of the beachfront

resort where the conference was held and a visual reminder to register. The only thing missing from the reminder was a phone number to call or a URL to visit to sign up. I've also seen lenticular imaging used to create the effect of animation. This can be an eye-catching way to demo a key product benefit.

Double Outer Envelopes. Why would a direct marketer put a standard #10 window OE inside another larger #10 window OE—especially considering the high cost of paper and postage? It adds intrigue, ignites the reader's curiosity, and has the potential to increase readership and response. Properly executed, an envelope-within-an-envelope format provides an opportunity for you to send one message to the mail screener—at home or at the office—and another to the targeted reader. I've also seen a mailing with a sealed tagalong note attached to the back of an OE with the teaser, "Read Me FIRST!" While this extra piece may add to the cost of the mailing, it also may be a sound investment in bottom-line results.

The Republican National Committee emphasizes its "Liberal Agenda Ballot" by placing it inside a bright yellow envelope, and then inserting this envelope, letter and reply envelope inside a Kraft paper outer.



Increase Openability

Something-of-Value Teaser. The first time I saw a solo mailing in a clear OE with a dollar bill clipped to the contents, I was horrified. Did these people really believe they could buy me off with a buck? Then I started thinking about the strategy behind this teaser tactic. Who in the world isn't going

(continued on page 20)

(continued from page 19)

to open this envelope to retrieve the dollar bill? And if you've targeted the right audience with a strong and compelling message, getting your reader to open your envelope is the first major step in getting your mailing read. The Heritage Foundation uses this same technique with a First Class postage stamp paper-clipped to the envelope's contents. To add to the authenticity of the mailing, it also places a bright orange "WARNING" sticker on the back of the envelope that says contents are being monitored and those who tamper with them will be prosecuted. While I have no idea what the response rate is to this campaign, I'm guessing the open rate is impressive.

Free Gift. When you can cost-effectively include an appropriate free gift inside your mail piece, it's a powerful tool for getting the mailing opened and read. The gift can be anything from those ubiquitous return address labels found in cause-related mailings

to a foreign coin glue-tipped to the top of a survey with an advance note of thanks for answering and returning the survey. For example: "Please keep the coin as a small thank you or share it with a young collector."

A variation on this theme is the "Guardian Angel" token found in a Catholic Relief Services mailing with the copy, "Keep this guardian angel as a reminder of the children you help." The key is to make sure the gift not only is appropriate, but noticeable without opening the envelope.

Support Benefits

Product Samples. These gadgets and gizmos are a unique and extensive category of their own. Here are a few examples to start you thinking about how to use them in your own situation:

- Swatches—There's nothing like a product swatch to overcome the objection, "I don't believe it's true." When I wrote for Fingerhut, we included a swatch with copy describing how Fingerhut's his and her PVC jackets had

the look and feel of genuine leather.

- Book Pages and Binder Cards—Among the many product samples in my files are the collectible three-hole-punched cards from publishers of books such as "The Complete Guide to Natural Healing." Not only does the publisher include six sample cards with actual content in its mailing, but it also provides a usable sample of soothing eye tea bags—an appropriate free gift. The thing to remember about samples is that the format can be anything from a magazine issue or a video tour of your college campus to a CD demo or consumable product sample.

How are you going to use bells and whistles, gadgets, and gizmos to grab attention, increase the openability of your mailings and support your benefit statements? Report back to me. ■

Pat Friesen is president of Pat Friesen & Co. She can be reached at (913) 341-1211, via e-mail at pat@patfriesen.com or by visiting www.PatFriesen.com.