

How to Make Prospects Rip Open Your Envelopes

The envelope is the Rodney Dangerfield of direct mail. It just doesn't get any respect.

After all, its purpose is not to position your product. Its job is not to entertain or amuse. It's not chatty like a letter or impressive like a brochure. Aside from holding together the contents until delivered, an envelope's job is to get ripped open. Here's how.

So, ironically, the lowly envelope is arguably the single most important part of any direct mail package because it absolutely must get opened. Otherwise, all those more respectable pieces are just so much wasted paper. So here are a few ideas to get your envelopes ripped to shreds:

- Follow headline rules to write teaser copy. You can generate interest with a provocative statement, provoke curiosity with a question or incomplete sentence, or state a problem on the envelope and suggest that the solution is inside. Teaser copy acts like a headline to draw people in.
- Use teaser copy to select your audience. It should be clear at a glance that your message is addressed specifically to your reader. Use key words that relate to your ideal prospect's interests or identity, such as "Exclusive offer for golfers inside" or "For Serious Investors Only."
- Refer to the contents of the envelope. Tell your reader there's something free, valuable, new, or exclusive inside. If you've actually enclosed something, such as a sample, booklet, checklist, discount coupon, how-to guide, or newsletter, say so.
- Use directive language. You can prompt your reader to open the envelope with simple copy such as "INSIDE," "See inside," or "Open immediately." Combine this with a benefit to jumpstart your sales message. "FREE Recipes! Look inside ..." or "How to pay \$0 in taxes! See inside for details"
- Fully develop your envelope real estate. If you have a flashy, desirable product, you can crank up the excitement by using every square inch of your envelope, front and back. Show the product. Bullet point benefits. Starburst your special price. Hint at a special gift for immediate orders. This works best for consumer offers that are proven sellers needing little explanation, such as books, software upgrades, fact-packed newsletters, etc. But it can work with virtually anything.
- Use illustrations or photos. If you're spilling your guts on the envelope, you might as well go all the way and show your product, premium, or gift. Simple pictures communicate instantly. A photo of a book with the word "FREE" next to it is better than lines and lines of clever copy.
- Consider involvement devices. Stickers, tokens, stamps, coins, scratch-offs, lift-up tabs, attached notes, seals, and other widgets can be used to good effect if you have the budget, if they can boost response enough to justify the added cost, and if they fit the feel of your message.