

Ten Time Tested Tricks:

Getting your envelope opened

- 1) **Lose the barcode.** As a non-profit mailer, these ugly barcodes only save you about 1-2 cents per address. If 2 cents keeps your mail out of the trash, it's money well spent.
- 2) **Skip the window** while you're at it. Window envelopes make it cheaper and easier to address your piece, but it makes your mail look far less inviting: It LOOKS like a bill or a donation request.
- 3) **Size matters.** The number 10 envelope is the most common thing in the mailbox. Put your piece in a baronial or announcement sized envelope. These are a little taller and a little shorter than a commercial envelope, so will stand out in the mailbox. They don't cost any more to mail either. Your envelope must be larger than 5 x 3.5 inches and can be up to 11.5 x 6.125 inches. Call Reno Type if you'd like a chart of available envelope sizes.
- 4) **Use a stamp.** Instead of an indicia in the upper right corner, use a non-profit stamp. This won't change your postage rate. It'll add a penny each to the cost of production, but even a microscopic increase in response makes it worthwhile.
- 5) **Don't just address the envelope. USE IT!** Almost everyone automatically looks at the upper left of an envelope to see who it is from. Make sure that corner is where your most compelling information will be seen. Have a matching grant? Put that info here. A short teaser? This is the place for it. How about a teaser on the back flap?
- 6) **Color me interested.** Study after study has shown that the effective use of color increases response rate over black and white. Print a teaser message in color. Use a colored envelope. Address in color. Effective use of color does not mean being Garish. Work with your designer or printer to make sure it is in color AND looks good.
- 7) **Make it dimensional.** So long as it does not make your piece weigh more than 3 ounces or be over ¼ of an inch thick, adding a tangible item to your envelope will not increase the postage cost. A magnet, letter opener, pen or keychain are just a few examples of items that will get your envelope opened. Few people can resist opening the envelope to see what you've sent them. Yes, the item itself will cost something, but if it is a useful item it will be kept, used, shared and will generate additional impressions and interest.
- 8) **Personalize it.** Addressing your appeal to "valued supporter" is a sure way to prove that your supporter is not actually valued and earn a place for your appeal in the circular file. Use their name in the address and follow through by addressing them by name in the actual appeal letter.
- 9) **Don't send your appeal at a time when it will compete** with a lot of other mail. Avoid October to early November during election years for example, or early to late December, when holiday mail takes over and delivery times are not as predictable.
- 10) **Address it to the right people.** Of-course you are sending your appeal to your known donors. But have you looked at ADDING new prospective donors? Your mission may suggest ideal demographics to target, and your list, if large enough, can be used to create a "model" of the ideal donor. For-profit enterprises use this regularly. It's time for non-profit agencies to do the same thing! Talk to your direct mail provider about "list modeling" or acquiring new names through demographic or propensity selections.



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