

Elements of Direct Mail

There are many different elements that can be used in a direct mail package. Each has its own purpose, but all should be used with the same objective in mind. The objective should be to attract the interest of the prospect and then maintain it long enough for them to accept the offer. The elements used in a direct mail package will vary according to the format selected for that promotion. There are some basic specifications that need to be determined on all elements. The specifications should be developed so that they coordinate with the design of all the elements in the package.

Basic Specifications:

- Size
- Paper stock
- Ink color
- Special coatings

Optional Specifications:

- Personalization
- Folding
- Die cutting
- Perforations

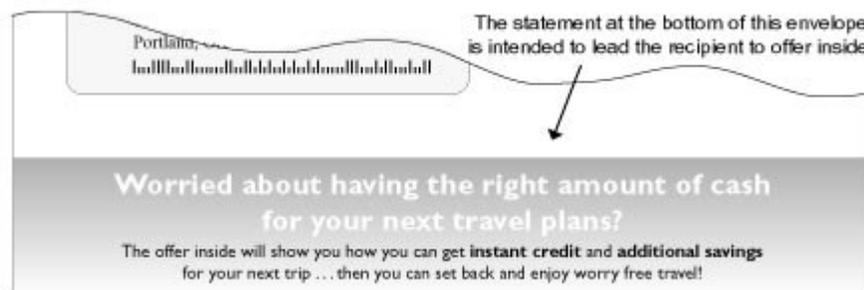
Some of the basic elements for direct mail are the outer envelope, sales letter, brochure, response device, inserts and reply envelope. The basic elements are explained below.

Mailing Envelope

The design of the outer envelope is very important. It can make the difference in whether or not the recipient opens the envelope to view its content. It should give some clue as to what type of subject is enclosed so that it attracts the attention of the recipient. Some of the techniques that can be used are discussed below.

Curiosity

Building curiosity is one way to arouse interest. Creating curiosity can be accomplished by using an incomplete sentence or story to lead them to the inside of the envelope to continue the statement or complete the story. You could also place a headline from the offer on the outside of the envelope if you felt it would be effective.



Targeting

Design the envelope according to the audience that you are targeting. If your product can be used by different industries, use a different envelope for each that contains elements targeting that group. The response rate will be greater if the recipient feels the mailing is being sent to their particular industry

sector. Personalizing the message to the interests of the people in a particular geographic area can also be very effective.

Attention Getter

A window, other than an address window, can be placed on an envelope to allow the recipient to view part of the content. The window which allows part of the content to be view is intended to arouse the curiosity of the recipient, which in turn should increase the response of that mailing. Versioning can also be used to target different interest groups. The element that show through the window could be changed according to the interest of each targeted group by the use of laser imprinting or different letters or brochures showing through the window. Also, having some type of device, such as coins, stamps, discount cards, membership cards or sample products, show through the window will increase response.

Versioning:
Using different versions (letters, brochures, or inserts) that relate to different interest groups.

Transparent envelopes are also good attention getters. They work on the same basis as a window envelope that allows you to view the envelope content. A transparent envelope allows you to view all of the content on the front and back side of the package. The information you do not want viewed before the envelope is opened can be collated between the top and bottom pieces of the package.



The transparent envelope makes it easy to view the important information, items that imply value and enclosed selling devices. Transparent envelopes also come in colors to add another creative design feature to your package. To see more information on transparent envelopes, see **Envelope Types**.

Value

Using value or making the envelope look important is a way of getting people's attention.

Listed below are some ways of using value to attract attention.

Make a statement on the outside of the envelope about the value or importance of the content.

- Use a specialty type envelope.
- Have the envelope made from a specialty grade of paper.
- Add seals and stickers with messages.
- Indicate that there is something free inside of the envelope.

Urgency

Conveying the feeling of urgency makes people feel that if they do not respond, they will be missing out on a special opportunity. Indicating on the envelope an expiration date or that there is only a limited quantity available, are a couple of ways to express the urgency of an offer.

Envelope Size

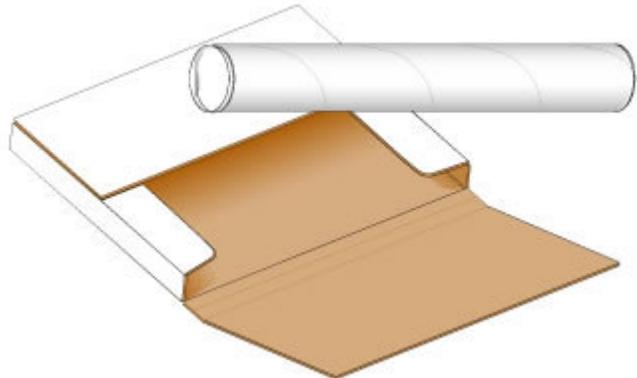
There are many standard size envelopes available in different styles and colors. The most commonly used size in direct mail is a 6" x 9" booklet. It is a size that works well for many mailings and is the largest size that some inserters will take. One drawback to using the 6" x 9" size is that it may be acquainted with containing something someone is direct market selling and result in a negative response by the recipient. But, used with the right creativeness, it can also result in a positive response.

Using a standard size envelope is generally the most cost effective option. However, if the mailing is large enough and you have the time to wait for a special order, a custom envelope can be almost as cost effective and worth the increase in response that it may create. To see some of the standard sizes that are available in various types of envelopes, see [**Envelope - Sizes.**](#)

When choosing an envelope that is custom made, be sure to consider postal regulations so that the envelope complies with the minimum and maximum requirements. Failure to comply to the postal requirements can increase your postage costs dramatically. Also, if you want to use automated rates, there are other guidelines that must be followed. Automated rates are approximately half of regular First Class Mail rates. To see details on the postal requirements, see [**Postal Regulations - Outgoing Mail.**](#) For details on the different mailing classes that are available, see [**Postal Design.**](#)

Mailing Package Alternatives

There are alternatives to using an envelope for your mailing package. The content of your package may require the use of a mailing package that would satisfy a more 3-dimensional need, such as a box, tube or polybag.



Your Letter

The letter of your mail piece is used to tell your story or convey your message. The length of your letter will depend on how much information needs to be presented to get your message across. It can be as short or long as necessary. You will need to decide on the type of structure you will want the heading and signature of your letter to be. The structure type could be corporate, personal or product reference.

The physical size of the letter can be most any size you want it to be. Certain sizes have a tendency to imply that the letter is a certain type.

8 1/2" x 11" is a standard business size.

7 1/4" x 10 1/2" monarch implies that it is a personal letter.

5 1/2" x 8 1/2" resembles an informal note.

Using a non-standard size may add more interest than a standard size. An 11" x 17" can be folded to an 8 1/2" x 11", giving you four pages to present your message.

Your letter can be most any size that fits with the overall concept of your promotion. One thing to keep in mind is how well it will cut out of a standard stock size, eliminating as much waste as possible. The cut out is something that should be checked with the production department.

The letter should be easy to read and have an interesting look to it. Using personalization, headlines, bold type, handwritten notes and drawings or photos will help stimulate interest. Use short easy to read paragraphs. If it is a business letter, it should be more formal and printed only on one side.

This letter is a non-standard size.

**Century
2000 Travel**

Jason C. Whitefield
1824 North Harrison St.
Portland, OR 97203-5071
bill@century2000travel.com

Dear Jason C. Whitefield,

We realize that you are someone who enjoys traveling and we are here to make it even more enjoyable. Century 2000 Travel has had the pleasure of helping individuals like yourself enjoy their travel experience for over 30 years.

Today we are here to offer you another outstanding benefit that will make your travel experience even more enjoyable... the Century 2000 Travel Card. With your travel card you will get:

- **Ready Cash** - No need to carry all that cash or traveler's checks, use your card to make any purchases you would with cash.
- **Emergency Cash** - We will cover you, up to twice the amount of your initial deposit, in case you have unexpected expenses.
- **Additional Savings** - Your Century 2000 Travel Card will also provide discounts on lodging, entertainment, meals and car rentals.

The way your card works is that you deposit the amount that you would like into your account two weeks before the day you are to start your travel. Your card will be sent to you one week before your travel start date. The card will be activated and ready to use the day before your travel begins.

You can use the travel card for your lodging, expenses, car rentals, for meals and other purchases wherever cash cards are accepted, and at any ATM to get out cash. If you run short... don't worry!... we have you covered. The only charge to you is a 3% handling charge on the amount that you use from your account. The balance of your account is sent back to you, or if you wish, you can leave it in your account for later use. If you use more than your initial deposit, we bill you for that amount.

Century 2000 has access to the top rated hotels, resorts, cruises, and bed & breakfasts in the world. We are able to offer discounts to you in lodging and other travel expenses, no matter where in the world you would like to travel. We can make recommendations for you that will meet your budget, and most with our Century 2000 Travel Card you can enjoy your travels even more, knowing your cash needs will be taken care of.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR TRAVEL CASH NEEDS TODAY!

To apply for your travel card, fill in the information on the attached application, and indicate which card design you would like by placing the correct sticker, from the enclosed insert, in the design location. To make your initial deposit, send a check, money order, or bill to credit card information below. Use the reply envelope provided with this letter to return your application. (over, please)

• **Ready Cash!**
Why carry cash when you can use your Travel Card!

• **Credit if Needed!**
Relax knowing we have you covered.

• **Added Savings!**
Discounts on car rentals, lodging, entertainment and meals.

Two Ways to Apply!
Fill out application below or apply on-line at century2000travel.com

**Century
2000 Travel**
P.O. Box 13437
Arkington, VT 05250
802-314-9999

Fill out application below, detach at perforation, and return it in the furnished reply envelope.

Please print clearly. Use black or blue ink.

**Century
2000 Travel**
P.O. Box 13437
Arkington, VT 05254
802-314-9999

Yes, please send me my Century 2000 Travel Card that will be good for the amount stated below.

Amount of Deposit: \$ _____

DESIGN STYLE: _____ Departure Date: _____

Travel Location: _____

Deposit Method: Check Money Order
 Credit Card - Card Name: _____
Credit Card No.: _____

Date of Expiration: _____

Make checks payable to: Century 2000 Travel

Send to: Century 2000 Travel
P.O. Box 13437
Arkington, VT 05258-0437

I would like an agent to contact me to help me with my travel plans. Contact me by:
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Please send me more information in regard to the Century 2000 Travel Card.

TOLL FREE

Travel Card Deposit No.: TC193788

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Member's Maiden Name: _____

Travel Location: _____

Deposit Method: Check Money Order
 Credit Card - Card Name: _____
Credit Card No.: _____

Date of Expiration: _____

Make checks payable to: Century 2000 Travel

Send to: Century 2000 Travel
P.O. Box 13437
Arkington, VT 05258-0437

* Credit Agreement on Back Must Be Signed *

A photo, personalization, headlines and bold type are some of the features used to give it an interesting look. It also has the response piece attached at the bottom.

Brochures

A brochure does not always have to be included as part of the direct mail package. If the brochure does not provide essential information or purpose to the overall message of the promotion, it is an unnecessary cost. If a brochure is designed well and adds credibility to the message, it is well worth including. Testing with and without the brochure will help to evaluate its value.

The brochure is a good way of showing more details about a product or service. The recipient can actually see a picture of the product being offered or a setting in which a service is being rendered. It helps to give them a better perspective and feel for what is actually being offered.

The brochure should contain all of the major aspects of the offer that are contained in the letter, such as the basic offer, testimonials, warranties, contact information and order information. The brochure could also be designed to contain the response piece as one of the panels. A perforation would be added so that it could be removed and mailed back. The perforated response section would eliminate the need for a separate response piece.

The recipient should be able to understand the entire promotion by just reading the brochure. At times, it may be the only thing that is read by the recipient. The brochure, like all the elements of the direct mail package, should stimulate the recipient to respond to the offer.

Listed below are some points to keep in mind when planning and designing your brochure.

Use the largest area of your brochure to show the best illustrations of your product.
The opening or the front page should be used to express your main message or offer.
Make the message appeal to their needs and emotions.
Express what benefits the product or service can provide for them.

Brochure Formats

There are several formats that are used for brochures. Some of the more common ones are shown below.

Brochure - Generally thought of as a 4 or 6 page, printed and folded piece.

Booklet - Eight or more pages glued or stapled together.

Broadside - Larger than a brochure and is intended to be unfolded to a flat piece. It usually consists of both parallel and perpendicular folds.

Pamphlets, Flyers, Inserts & Stuffers - Smaller items that generally unfold to be no larger than the letter is when unfolded.

Response Piece

The main purpose of all the elements in the direct mail package is to get someone to respond with the response piece. The response piece may be anything from a complex credit application to a single "Send more information" card.

Some points to consider when planning and designing your response piece are shown below.

The response piece is generally about the size of an envelope. Be sure it is large enough to be noticed.

If it will be returned in a reply envelope, be sure it is a size that can be easily inserted into the envelope.

If the response piece is a self mailing card, be sure it is large enough to meet postal requirements, see **Postal Regulations - Business Reply Mail**.

It should contain easy to follow instructions and sufficient room to enter information, making it easy to use.

Response pieces that are order forms should list all of the available items so that the respondent only has to check the item or fill in a quantity.

Requests for information should make it easy to understand exactly what they are requesting.

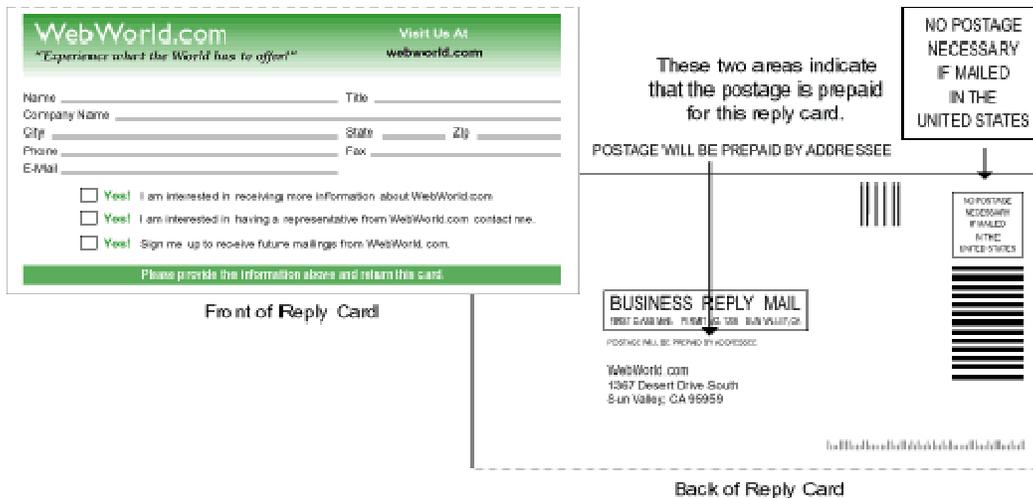
Add a look of value to help attract the attention of the respondent. Some ways of attracting their attention are shown below:

- Make it look like a check or certificate
- Use a border that resembles that of a traveler's check or stock certificate
- Use seals, foil embossing and stamps

The location of the response piece in the mailing is important. It could be the first or last thing that you want them to see. If it contains the offer, you may want it to be the last thing so they see the entire message about the offer first.

It could be a section at the top or bottom of the letter so that it is sure to be seen. It is then detached to be returned.

Provide a preaddressed business reply envelope or if a reply card is used, be sure that it is preaddressed.



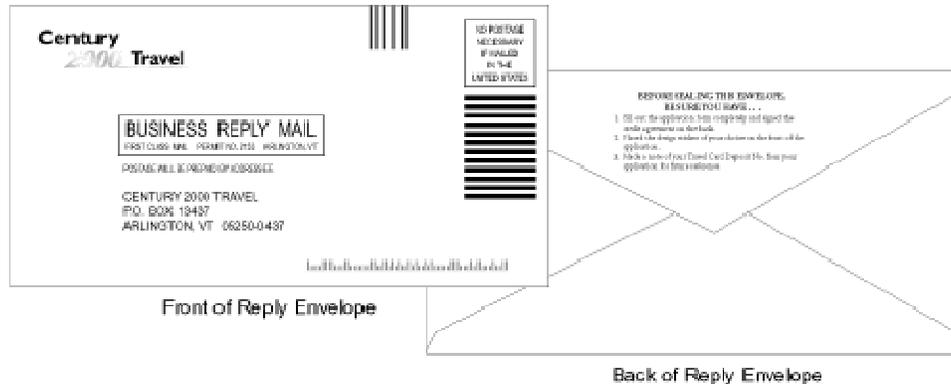
Prepaid postage on the reply envelope or card is an added feature that will result in an increase in responses.

Reply Envelope

The reply envelope is an important part in the direct mail package. It encourages a faster response and makes it convenient for the recipient to respond. It also provides more confidentiality than the reply card when sending sensitive information.

The reply envelope can be designed creatively to reflect the theme of the promotion. When designing the envelope, there are some restrictions that have been set up by the United States Postal Service as to where copy can be placed on the envelope. Following the guidelines will still give you some good options for creatively placing copy. The envelope can have postage prepaid or request that a stamp be added. For details on the USPS guidelines for business reply mail, see **Postal Regulations - Business Reply Mail**.

The back of the reply envelope can also be printed. It is a good place to remind the recipient of the necessary steps that must be followed when filling out the respond card.



Miscellaneous Inserts

Generally the letter, brochure, reply device and mailing envelope are all that you need in your direct mail package. If other inserts are used, be sure there is a good reason to include them. Some of the reasons that additional inserts are used are to draw more attention to a message that may get lost in the main message, or it can be used to offer a special deal in addition to the main offer. Inserts of this type are sometimes called buckslips. It could be an additional letter from another person of authority within the company, such as the president, reinforcing what a valuable offer it is. The letter could also be a testimonial from a satisfied customer on the quality of the product or service.

Different variations of inserts may be used as a way to use versioning in the direct mail offer. The versioned inserts would be used to change the offer for different segments of the mailing lists according to geographic, demographic or gender. The information on the versioned inserts would relate to the interests of the different groups.

Elements of Self Mailers

The self mailer format has gained popularity in the last few years. It is different from the traditional direct mail format of a mailing envelope, letter, insert and reply piece in that it is designed with all the different elements combined into one. All elements are printed in one press run, making it less expensive than running them all as separate runs, especially in larger quantity runs.

The self mailer forms its own outgoing envelope and can have a business reply envelope included as part of the mailer. There are many formats available with unlimited possibilities. For more information on mailers, see **Mailers - Types** or **Mailers - Construction**.



Information Request

When the offer consists of a request for information, you are really dealing with a two step process. The original offer is to send back a reply that requests additional information. The second step is supplying the information requested. The requested information can be in the form of a brochure, information kit, video tapes, CDs or DVD discs. The second step should have the same creative design and tactics as the original offer. It should contain a letter which clearly states the actual offer and is designed to get the attention of the recipient. The mailing package and any additional inserts must be interesting and designed to persuade the recipient to take the necessary action to read, view or access the information provided.