

A Little Known Secret

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Here's a little known secret. Persuasive print (*snail mail, e-mail, facsimiles*) will increase the quantity and quality of your sales contacts – it can even reduce the cost. This holds true when you're calling prospects or customers – more so, when the number of customer calls prevents you from prospecting and developing new accounts.

Regardless of the media, most of the printed matter we receive is impersonal, poorly written, confusing and difficult to read. Yet, when properly planned and executed, your persuasive print will develop more and better leads, increase your outbound "contact rate", improve account retention, speed collection and boost your competitive position.

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Here's a challenge and a caution.

THE CHALLENGE. People discard more printed matter than they read. The sad truth is that most sales correspondence doesn't "speak" value nor does it speak "directly" to the target's motives and values. These days, you and I receive more "junk mail" via the fax machine and the Internet than via the postal carrier.

THE CAUTION. Persuasive print cannot replace the power of conversations by phone or in person. Don't shirk your responsibility by using print to replace sales calls or you'll pay a terrible price. The idea is to augment and reinforce the value of your calls.

Here are 13 Tips for writing powerful, easy-to-read, persuasive print.

1. Get to the point without ANY self promotion. Arouse readers immediately with problems, potential outcomes, third parties, provocative statements or questions.
2. Write in active tense. (Action verbs in the beginning of sentences.)
3. Although you're contacting multiple people, write to a singular person, not the group. It feels more personal.
4. Paint vivid pictures. Use a thesaurus and a dictionary to replace less effective words.
5. Be informal. Be concise. Use contractions.
6. Ask for, or recommend an action (a close) as often appropriate.
7. Limit the basic message to one page. (There are rare exceptions.)

Use separate enclosures or attachments for details. Print enclosures in different colors and refer to them in your cover letter.

Avoid attachments to e-mail unless you've already earned their trust or the info has been requested.

8. Print with 12-point fonts (larger for older readers, short messages, or headlines).
9. Use serif fonts (those with feet) for most copy - sans serif fonts for headlines.
10. Never use more than three fonts in one message (two is a safe limit).
11. Incorporate graphics (pictures, diagrams, charts) to gain attention or validate claims.
12. Create graphics with copy and space by using bullets, indented paragraphs, bold face and underlining. Don't overdo it.
13. Review & edit the copy at least ten times over several days to tighten and refine copy.



David Yoho provides systems and customized education that helps organizations outthink, outsell, outmaneuver and outnegotiate their competition without sacrificing profit or integrity.

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