

This section from the book, '14 Ways to Squeeze a Print Budget' contains descriptions of specific strategies that have helped some companies get the most out of their print budgets. These ideas are examples and do not attempt to cover the full range of possibilities that may be available for your company.

If you would like to investigate a new approach for your work, contact us for a free, no pressure consultation.

Mike Rickert, President  
Catalog Press Corporation  
3 Old Dock Road  
Yaphank, NY 11980  
(516) 967-8336  
(516) 620-0950 fax  
[mrickert@catalog-press.com](mailto:mrickert@catalog-press.com)  
[www.catalog-press.com](http://www.catalog-press.com)

## 11. Up your response and customer retention rates

### Adjust the Content

With direct mail, the top 4 factors for response rates seem to be:

- Price – especially if your product appears to be a commodity
- Headline has to be a benefit, not a feature (sizzling steak, not corn fed beef)
- Ask and answer an interesting question, but don't get them in a headlock by repeating your company's name
- Humor

'Announcements,' or it being based on cutesy graphics, are listed as the 2 greatest failure methods.

Poll your customers. Ask them to help you make your business even better - ask them if they will tell you reasons why they use you. The answers can be surprising!

Sometimes it's because you're the only one with estimates within 24 hours, and sometimes it's because you seem to be able to walk on water. These answers should be considered when you're working on presenting your benefits.

### Adjust the Print Method

On the mechanical side of this, what kinds of printing affect response rates, the best way is to run tests. One direct marketer was printing about 15 runs a week of 4 and 8 page brochures, averaging 50,000 run lengths, some as self-mailers, some inserted into envelopes, and they were printing these on coated text weight.

*They tested their assumptions by running different formats – 4 color on coated, 2 color on coated, 2 color on offset, and split each of these at different times for self-mailers or inserted in envelopes, and after several tests – the response rate was the same every time.*

*They were then free to lower their costs - by running on half webs, gluing spine and trimming on folders, and they then returned 40% of their advertising budget for more product tests. In this case the savings was over \$1,000,000 annually that they could reinvest.*

There's a good example in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter, '**How is it going to be used, how long, and in what environment?**' If your customers have catalogs in front of them when ordering, they may buy more than if they do not and are merely phone-ordering an item they've run out of. People tend to hang onto perfect bound catalogs longer than saddle bound catalogs. *The net gain over 6 months in that detailed case is an increase in sales of \$700,000 with an additional cost of \$15,000.*