

Conclusions

- 1** The most basic mailings (static, black and white) had a response rate that averaged 0.46% – which was under the so-called industry standard of 1%, but may be closer to an industry average.
- 2** Adding a **name only** to the piece—a basic level of personalization—increased response rates by 44% over the Program 1 static, black-and-white mailing. There is anecdotal information that adding a name to a mailing no longer has the power it once had. In this test, at least, it did have an effect.
- 3** Adding **full color** increases response rates by 45% over the Program 1 static, black-and-white mailing. It was surprising that this level of response was so close to the personalization level of response, but even more surprising that color alone could have such a positive effect.
- 4** Adding **name only** and **full color** increased response rates by 135% over the Program 1 static, black-and-white mailing. Personalization and color appear to be a double whammy and produce a significant increase in response.
- 5** Applying **database** information in constructing the offer and the piece increases response rates by over 500% over the Program 1 static, black-and-white mailing. Tying the mailing into something you know about the recipient—past buying habits being the most common—appears to provide a significant benefit. The database information should be used in such a way as to not threaten the recipient's privacy.
- 6** The addition of a **discount** to the mailing has a positive effect. In Program 7 we added a discount coupon to the static, black and white Program 1 piece response rates jumped by over 1,000 percent. This is an area where more research needs to be done. Would discounts alone create the volume of responses without the other attributes? We are not sure.

In comparing mailings with discounts, one can see the effect of this one variable.

	Program	Programs Compared	Difference
6(a)	S/BW/DC	7:1 <i>Program 7 was compared with program 1: S/BW</i>	1425.68%
6(b)	D/DB/BW/DC	8:5 <i>Program 8 was compared with Program 5: D/DB/BW</i>	438.11%
6(c)	D/DB/FC/DC	9:6 <i>Program 9 was compared with Program 6: D/DB/FC</i>	148.39%

You can see in 6(a-c) that the only variable was the addition of a discount coupon. More interesting is the fact that “the works” did not have a more significant effect.

It was also interesting that the responses followed a similar pattern through all four categories. We would have expected some deviance between consumer and business-to-business markets.

What does this mean to the printing industry?

It means that print buyers, especially for direct marketing materials, will increasingly demand variable data printing in full color. Although some of the printing may be done with traditional offset (“shells” for later imprinting), the level of variability required can only be done with true digital printing. All of our tests used 400-600dpi toner-based printing. In our opinion, the digital printer/press will co-exist next to the offset press.