

"Should I Personalize?"

A Direct Marketer's Guide to Personalized Mailing



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How to Determine Whether or Not to Personalize Your Direct Mail Piece.

by Bob Jurick, Chairman, **Fala** Direct Marketing, Inc.

“Should I Personalize?”

You probably ask yourself that question every time you plan a mailing. And, if you're like most marketers, the question makes you hesitate—because you're never quite certain of the answer.

No one can predict the exact response to any direct mail letter or package before it's mailed. But, based on the test results of millions of mailings, **Fala** has developed some guidelines to help you determine when personalization will enhance response.

Let's begin with the key issue of whether or not personalized direct mail is effective.

“Does Personalization Increase Response?”

Our own experience proves—and the experts agree—that a personalized direct mail letter or package will almost always “outpull” the same letter or package when not personalized. Here's what the pros say:

“Using a personal name on an envelope will improve response if the list used is current. The use of a processed or computerized personal letter or note in a mailing also increases response.”

—**Roy G. Ljungren**, *The Business-to-Business Direct Marketing Handbook*

“One of direct mail's biggest advantages over mass media is its ability to make personal one-to-one contact with your prospect. The letter is the most important element in a direct mail package. In your salutation, use a name if available. Your copy should call people out by name, if possible.”

—**Ray Jutkins**, *Direct Marketing: How You Can Really Do It Right*

“A cornerstone of direct marketing, particularly within the direct mail media, is the ability to personalize communications. Addressing a person by name is one obvious example. Nothing is as fascinating as a person's own name, and evidently the more frequently and prominently it appears, the better many mailings will do.”

—**Ed Nash**, *Direct Marketing: Strategy/Planning/Execution*

“A fundamental axiom of the direct mail business is that the more you can personalize the message and package you send the prospect, the greater the probability that the prospect will respond.”

—**Susan Oliver**, *WDRG Network News* (September 1986)

“Personalizing helps melt the ice of skepticism and apathy.”

—**Herschell Gordon Lewis**, *On the Art of Writing Copy*

“Does Personalization Pay Off?”

It's not enough for personalized mailings merely to pull better than non-personalized mailings. As Bob Stone, author of *Successful Direct Marketing Methods* observes, “They have to outpull by enough to pay for the extra cost of personalization.”

When computer personalization was introduced decades ago, the extra cost-per-thousand was tremendous, especially for small quantities. And so, even though these letters pulled better, the extra response didn't always justify the increased cost.

But with modern technology drastically reducing the cost of personalization, personalized direct mail now commonly proves more responsive—more profitable—and more cost-effective than “form” letters—even in small test quantities! For example, **Fala's** Admark ink-jet system can generate custom-personalized mailings for a little more than the cost of mailing labels...and at far less cost than tractor-fed laser printers.

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STOP! DON'T CRIPPLE OUR GOLF CARTS!
Why? Because you have in your hand
the result of the most advanced
direct-image ink-jet printer
available today—only this printer
generates 100 million impressions per hour... and
gives you a choice of typefaces,
or you can have string!
The price is comparable to non-
personalized mailings, so you
can test personalizing in small
quantities. And... you'll
receive JOHN SAMPLE
that we just added our name
into the list. Nothing to it.
If you want to see more surprising
samples, call us at 818-884-1918.

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Because Admark personalized ink-jet cards or envelopes cost a little more than labels, the extra response produced by the personalization is pure profit in your pocket!

“Is Personalization Appropriate For a Particular Mailing?”

Many mailing programs—perhaps the majority—will benefit by using personalization.

One proven application is in mailings to customers. People who have dealt with you in the past expect you to address them personally. Personalized letters gain their attention—and can result in higher response and more orders. Personalization “is worth its weight in gold, particularly if you have an established relationship with the recipient,” reports *Marketing News* (July 4, 1986).

In addition, an article in *Mail Order Digest* (November, 1986) observes: “Most business-to-business mailings lend themselves to personalization, as do consumer packages for insurance, financial services, fund raising, subscriptions—and any kind of sweepstakes or check mailings.” Areas where personalized letters have proven profitable for our clients include:

- Lead Generation
- Fund Raising
- Subscription and Membership
- Billing and Collection
- Renewals
- Mail Order
- Special and Time-Limited Offers
- Consumer
- Industrial and Business-to-Business
- Dealer and Distributor Communication
- Database Marketing

“What Methods Are Available for Personalizing Letters and Outer Envelopes?”

There are three basic methods: impact, laser and ink-jet.

IMPACT: Impact mailings are personalized by a computer printer. Keys strike an inked ribbon which imprints characters on the stock—just like on your daisy wheel computer printer.

Impact personalization has a look of immediacy and urgency...but you can use a variety of type, size and color. **Fala** produces impact letters using an IBM 4361 main-frame and four 5000 STC upper/lower case impact printers with 168-character print positions.

One unique **Fala** impact format, Rapid Dispatch, combines the personalization of a letter with the urgency of a telegram. Available in 11 or 14-inch formats with either Monarch or #9 envelopes.



LASER: Laser printers use an electromagnetic process. Charged particles adhere to the entire sheet, and the computer determines which stay on and which stay off.

Laser printing provides maximum flexibility for mixing and matching type styles and can even duplicate a signature in the letter-writer's handwriting. Laser printing also

gives you the highest resolution and the cleanest, sharpest image. Variables from your database (e.g., prospect's name, address, date of last order, products purchased) can be incorporated into the body of the letter.

Fala has continuous form laser printers for mailings of 50,000 pieces or more. We also are equipped with cut-sheet laser printers that give you that same crisp, sharp look for mailings of under 50,000, that can also print both sides of 11" or 14" pieces of paper in just one pass.



The **Fala** laser-printed direct mail letter most closely resembles an individually typed letter, giving you the quality required for business-to-business, financial services and other upscale offers and audiences.

INK-JET: Ink is sprayed onto a bar which has a series of holes configured according to instructions transmitted by the computer. **Fala** currently operates an Admark Formula II and an Admark Formula III. The Admark III is the most advanced direct-image ink-jet printer available. The Admark runs 20 percent faster than a continuous form computer printer and produces mailings at the rate of 30,000 pieces per hour.

Admark gives you a great deal of flexibility with coated stock and non-coated stock. Personalization appears in an area 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches high by 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches wide. Copy can be printed in many type sizes and styles. Admark can print sideways, right-side up, and upside down to accommodate folded pieces. The Admark can also be attached directly to a folder. Best of all, the cost

of Admark mailings is equivalent to non-personalized direct mail—and far less expensive than laser. We can provide cost-effective Admark personalization on test mailings as small as 5,000 pieces, but can also handle large volumes producing one million Admark pieces within 24 hours.

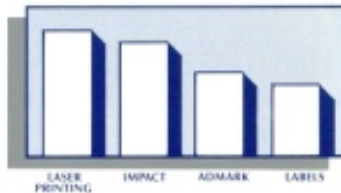
Admark allows personalization within a 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 9 $\frac{3}{16}$ " area.



“What Will it Cost to Personalize My Mailing?”

It depends on several factors, including the package format and the quantity to be mailed. Your best bet is to call **Fala** Direct Marketing and get a price quotation. As a rule of thumb, Admark ink-jet is the most cost-effective method of personalization available for a cost-per-thousand equivalent to labels. Impact and laser personalization are more expensive but can also pay off in many applications.

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“Is it True That Personalization is Cost-Effective for Large Volumes Only?”

No. New equipment on the market today is designed to make the cost of personalization affordable for business-

to-business marketers and other mailers who mail smaller quantities. **Fala** is equipped with sheetfed lasers that allow cost-effective laser letter production in quantities of under 50,000.

“Are Letters the Only Element that Can be Personalized?”

No. We can personalize your outer envelopes, self-mailers, flyers, reply cards, order forms—virtually any element in the package. For instance, we can add an OCR (optical character recognition) code to reply elements that enables incoming coupons to be scanned for automated tabulation of direct mail results.

“How Can I Make My Personalized Direct Mail More Effective?”

Here are some tips:

1. Always include a letter in a personalized package. A sales letter conveys a much more personal feel than a brochure or self-mailer.
2. Print the recipient's name and address on the letter above the salutation, and use his or her name in the salutation (e.g., “Dear Mr. Smith”).
3. Put a specific date on the letter, as you would when writing a personal letter to a friend (e.g., “January 16, 1990,” not “January 1990”).
4. Indent the first line of each paragraph five spaces.

5. Avoid handwritten margin notes, arrows, starbursts and other such devices. Effective in non-personalized mailings, they defeat the “me-to-you” mood personalization helps create.

6. Use short paragraphs.

7. Set the body of the letter in a typewriter typeface like Courier or Prestige. Do not typeset.

8. *Selectively* use any available data on your prospect list to extend personalization beyond mere insertion of name. For example, if you are trying to reactivate old accounts, remind them of the last time they bought from you, inserting the specific date into the body of the letter, if available.

But be careful not to overdo variables. “What may seem to you and your associates to be a clever use of the computer, can easily be considered a serious invasion of privacy by many people,” notes Ed McLean in *The Basics of Writing Copy*.

Writing Copy.

9. Do not overuse the prospect’s name. Constantly referring to the prospect by name in the letter (“...and so, Mr. Jones...”) gives a phoney ring to your copy. You wouldn’t talk to the prospect in person this way or insert his name six times in a short, personal note, would you? So don’t do it in direct mail.

10. On reply cards, ask recipients to indicate whether they are Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms. Add this information to your database so you can correctly identify sex in subsequent mailings.

“What are Some of the Most Common Mistakes Made in Producing a Personalized Mailing?”

Changing the copy after the piece has been designed without checking with the mailing house can result in disaster, because inserting or deleting text can affect the placement and alignment of the personalized elements.

Another common mistake is not checking a sample letter by inserting it into its envelope to make sure the personalization is properly aligned and shows through the window.

A third common mistake is not planning for imperfect or incomplete data on the mailing list. For instance, how will you handle consumer lists where some names don’t have titles (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss) available? (Solution: Put the full name in the salutation, e.g., “Dear Terry Jones”).

“What’s the Next Step?”

At **Fala** Direct Marketing, we offer all three styles of personalization—ink-jet, impact, and laser—plus complete direct response services from printing and production, through lettershop and lead tracking. For a free sample portfolio of successful personalized mailings and complete price information, call Bob or Jeff Jurick at (516) 694-1919. Or write us today.