



A Return on Your Envelope Investment

You'd think in today's digitized, mobilized, and webified world, consumers might regard envelopes as a quaint artifact for communication. Not so!

With 98% of consumers bringing it in, mail still connects with recipients in ways other media can't.¹ A recent USPS study also found that business correspondence mail that helps recipients perform tasks like overseeing finances or home management, is more likely to be read. This makes a solid case for the importance of return envelopes.

Whether used for collecting payments, customer feedback, or donations, return envelopes are essential to full-circle communications. Whenever organizations expect something back from a customer, prospect, member, or other entity, making that response simple and convenient is critical.

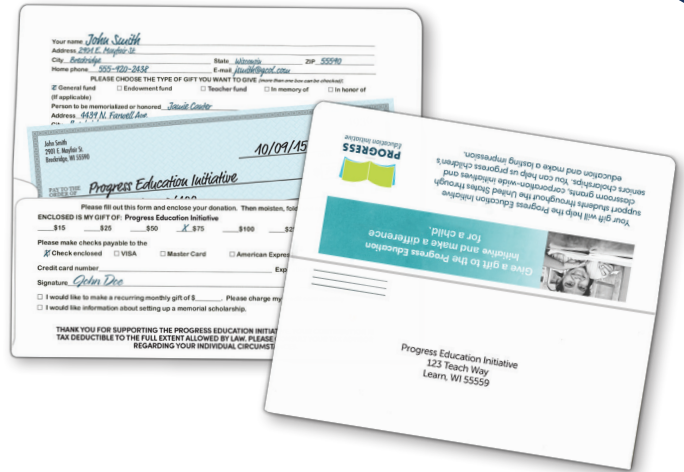
Return envelopes also provide extra benefits:

- They ensure mail will be returned to the correct address. There's no chance for customers mis-addressing their payment envelope, resulting in delivery delays due to poor handwriting.
- A USPS service called Origin IMb Tracing provides organizations with advance notice of how much mail is en route and which customers have mailed payments. Using this information, a company can adjust staffing levels to match anticipated demand, or forecast daily receipts. Take advantage of this capability by designing the payment stub so the postal barcode for the remittance address is visible through a return envelope's window.
- Return envelopes ensure all mailpieces are the same size, shape, and layout. This lets lock box vendors use automated equipment to process mail quicker and more economically.
- Return envelopes can contain other important information through a window, such as barcoded customer ID or policy numbers that can be scanned before opening the envelopes and removing contents. Or, organizations can route return mail to different departments while documents are still contained safely in the envelopes, minimizing risk of lost pages.

There are two types of reply envelopes sent through the U.S. Postal Service: Business Reply Envelopes (BREs) and Courtesy Reply Envelopes (CREs). BREs do not require customers to affix postage. Mailers must have a valid Business Reply Permit and deposit funds with the Post Office. First Class single-piece postage plus a handling fee is deducted from the mailer's account for every BRE returned. CREs do not require a permit, as customers must supply their own stamps to mail CREs back.

Since reply envelopes are hand-sealed, they can feature oversize flaps. This provides three large surfaces (front flap, back flap, and back of envelope) for messaging. Some return envelopes have perforated flaps to collect additional information or enable customers to order an advertised product. Recipients fill out the required information, tear at the perforation, and insert into the reply envelope. Non-profits and churches often use this method to authorize automatic deductions from donor bank accounts.

Regardless of the application, providing return envelopes will always increase response, speed up response rates, and promote convenience. In any mailing that measures recipient action, neglecting to include return envelopes is simply not an effective return on your mailing investment.



¹U.S. Postal Service® study in Mail Connects brochure. Author's content used under license, © Print/Mail Consultants



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