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try to read between the lines as to why they are loyal. Once you know why they love you, you can use that to your advantage. You can do this in several ways.

First, whatever you are doing that they love you for, keep doing it and find ways to continue improving to satisfy them even more. Never let your service slack just because you feel you already have them as a customer. Be consistent in your brand values in terms of product, service and communication. Stay in contact with them,

and keep it as personal as possible. Watch out for their best interest and work to keep them impressed. After all, these people are potentially walking advertisements for your company. They are worth a few extra minutes on the phone or an extra email updating them on the status of their project or a new product they may find interesting. When applicable, feel free to acknowledge that you always appreciate their quality referrals. And if they refer, ALWAYS remember to thank them personally!

*“Profit in business comes from repeat customers, customers that boast about your project or service, and that bring friends with them.”*

W. Edwards Deming

Second, consider how you can use your knowledge of their needs to produce more business from them. For example, if they consistently purchase one product or service from you, but you have a second, companion product or service that could benefit them, make sure to point this out. With today’s technology, you could even offer up this product while making a splash in their mailbox with a personalized direct mail campaign.

The moral of the story is to pony up and start treating your loyal, existing customers like they matter. After all, they potentially make up the bulk of your livelihood. If that isn’t worth a little of your time and money, I don’t know what is.

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## Are you harvesting the power of your existing customers?

As direct mail marketers, we often get so focused on obtaining new customers that we forget to nurture our existing customers. The fact is that existing customers are an incredibly profitable piece of your prospect base.

**Why nurture your existing customers?**

In a nutshell, the 80/20 rule should be reason enough to reconsider how you are handling your existing customers. The 80/20 rule states that 80% of your business comes from 20% of your customers. With a rule like that, you’d have to be crazy not to consider investing in your existing customers.



Not only does an existing customer cost much less than a new one—less marketing dollars, no training on your internal processes, you already understand their expectations and communication style—but a customer who purchases not only once, but twice is much more likely to keep coming back. They are also more likely to refer, and referrals give a great boost to your bottom line. Consider how many contacts each of your customers might have—25, 50, 100? Imagine how long it would take your sales force to not only locate but to make contact with that many prospects. These leads are at the tip of your customer’s finger, which means your existing customer could turn into a great tool for growing your business.

**How to tap into the power of repeat customers and create referrals.**

First and foremost you’ve got to get in your customer’s head. What you think they value about your product or service may not be the case. It might be your sales representative’s quirky sense of humor, rather than your low pricing that keeps them coming back. Dig around a little and

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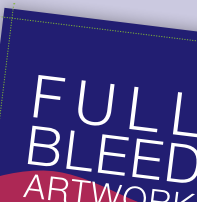
Present your offer in a way that makes cents

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What’s bleed all about?





## Featured Format

When planning your direct mail campaign, the right format makes all the difference.

### Check Letters: Present your offer in a way that makes cents

Sometimes your traditional sales letter just might not seem like its doing the trick, or you might have a special promotion that needs an extra little twist to make some impact. If you want the trustworthiness of a letter mailer, but something a little less expected, you may wish to try a check letter.

#### What is a check letter?

A check letter is typically 8.5x11 or 8.5x14 in size—the same as a traditional letter. However, the top third of the letter is transformed into a check graphic that peeks through the window of a #10 window envelope. The bottom two thirds of the sheet is reserved for your letter content.

#### When should I use a check letter?

Considering your prospect will see the check graphic through the window of the envelope, a check letter instantly signals that the mail piece is about money. Therefore, you'll want to use the check letter when you have a financial offer to make—a great cash discount, voucher or rebate offer. You'll also want to make sure you are tailoring the copy of your letter to heavily support this offer.

#### What makes a check letter a great format?

Check letters have been a longstanding direct mail format for several reasons. First, the letter naturally opens up the sales process. Check letters instantly signal money, and people love getting unexpected money. Once their interest is piqued by the possibility of an unexpected windfall or offer, they've taken the first step to being sold simply by opening the letter. Second, a check letter can save you money. Because the address is lasered onto the actual letter, this reduces the need for inkjet addressing envelopes. It is also possible to get away with a plain, unprinted window envelope in this case, which saves you money on printing. If you must have your logo or address on the envelope face, you could choose a double window where your address information would be printed on the upper left corner of the check graphic and show through a second window on the envelope.

Next time your traditional sales letter is feeling a bit stale, consider a change of pace with a check letter. Its a time-tested direct mail format that makes cents!

### Did You Know?

#### New USPS Flat Automation Changes Flat Mail Panel Requirements

The USPS recently announced that it has acquired new equipment to enable the automation of flat-rate mail. As a result, the mail panel requirements for these pieces have changed. The biggest change is that the mail panel portion of your flat-rate mail must now fall in the top half of your piece. As defined by the post office, for pieces not enclosed in an envelope or polybag, the top half of the piece is either one of the shorter edges when the bound or final folded edge is vertical and on the right-hand side of the piece. The address may be parallel or perpendicular to the top edge, but never upside-down and of course the postage must also fall within this top half. As for placement of your delivery address and return address in relation to the postage, feel free to continue positioning these items as usual, with the postage to the right or upper right of your delivery address and the return address about 1 inch above and to the left of your delivery address. These changes are effective immediately.

### Nonprofit Nook

#### Enable your Supporters

Have you ever gone to an organization's website and couldn't figure out where to donate? Received an appeal but you didn't know how much was an acceptable gift? When requesting money or time from your supporters, it literally pays to take steps to enable your supporters' giving. It is as simple as preprinting your donor's address on the reply device, enabling your website to accept donations (and instructions on how to give online), or offering an automated monthly giving system. Preprinting typical gift amounts on your reply devices or pre-populating your website donation form with a suggested amount takes the guesswork out of donating. Additionally, you may want to inform your prospects of other ways to give. This might include volunteering time or specific in-kind gifts that are needed—but remember to give details and take every precaution to make committing to these gifts as simple as possible.

## Direct Mail Design Tips

### What's bleed all about?

In today's marketplace, marketing staff are asked to wear many hats—performing multiple duties that they may or may not be completely trained in. One of these delegated roles is often direct mail design. Marketers-turned-designers often give their printer blank stares (accompanied by the tune of chirping crickets) when it is explained that the art must have a “bleed” to print properly. If you are unclear about the purpose of bleed, read below to see what it is all about.

#### What is bleed?

Bleed is a familiar concept to printers and seasoned designers, but is usually less familiar to those new to design. According to Wikipedia, bleed is printing that goes past the edge of the sheet after trimming. You see, your piece is usually printed on a much larger “parent” sheet and then trimmed down to the specified size. Although the trimming process is very precise, bleed helps accommodate for slight variations in the placement of the print on the sheet—known as “printer bounce”—and sets the stage for the highest quality trimmed product.

#### Why do I need a bleed?

Bleed is absolutely necessary to produce the highest quality trimmed product. If you fail to provide a bleed, any art that should go to the edge of your page may end up with a small sliver of unprinted paper showing. This is a look that doesn't do anything to improve the professional image of your company.

#### How much bleed do I need?

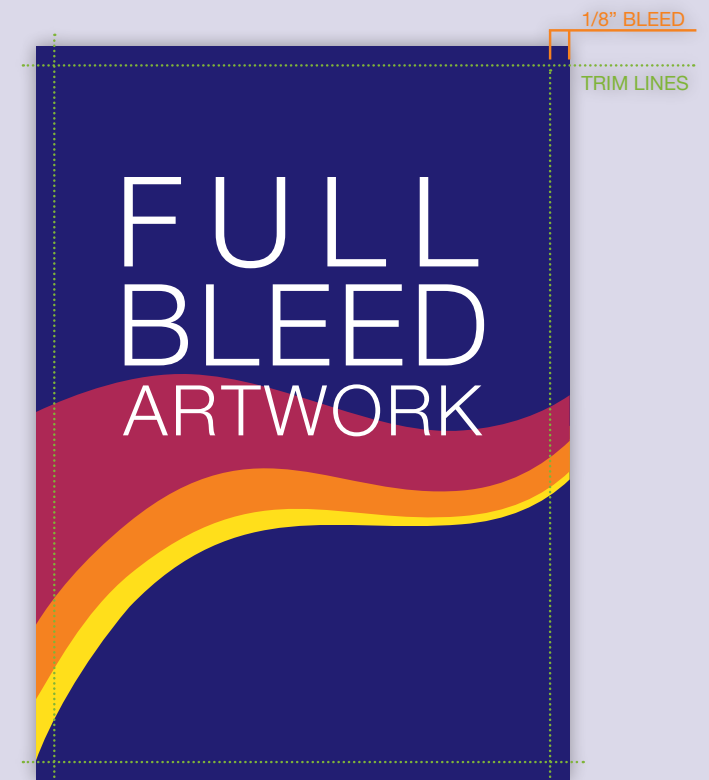
Typically, printers require an extra 1/8” of bleed graphics on each side of the piece. However, it is always a good idea to check with your own printer to learn their specific bleed requirements.

#### Can my printer just add the bleed for me?

The answer to that question depends on the files you supply to your printer. If you supply your printer with the native files for

your piece—that is, the original file you built the art in, as well as all the images and fonts you used to create the piece—then a printer with an in-house art department will be able to add the bleed for you. However, in today's marketing culture it has become commonplace to submit PDF files to your printer. While a PDF is a great way to supply virtually error-proof art to your printer, it also means they cannot make any adjustments to the art. In this case you would need to do one of three things: 1) add the bleed your art and resubmit it or 2) supply your printer with editable “native” files so he can add the bleed.

To clarify the concept of a bleed, we've provided a little illustration below. The concept of bleed is simple and the most novice of designers should easily be able to grasp the concept after a clear explanation.



ACCORDING TO A SURVEY PERFORMED BY THE USPS:

# 42%

of people look to their mail for financial savings.