

## **Save money with automation-friendly mail**

### **An RR Donnelley Hoechstetter TipLine publication**

Befuddled by the complexity of evolving postal regulations regarding standard mail? The post office offers significant discounts to mailers who pre-sort their mail, with deepest discounts going to those who also provide mail that is “automation-compatible.”

Here are three pointers that will speed your message through rain or snow or dark of night at the lowest possible cost.

#### **Pick the optimal size.**

Standard mail (that is, presorted mail that is not going first class) recognizes only two sizes that can be mailed at discounted rates: letters and flats. Everything else is either a post card, which mails at special first class rates, or a parcel.

- Letters are at least 3 ½" x 5" and no larger than 6 1/8" x 11 ½," and have an aspect ratio (length divided by width) between 1.3 and 2.5.
- Flats—which are more expensive to mail—are pieces with either dimension larger than prescribed letter dimensions, and with a total size smaller than 12" x 15." Flats have no aspect ratio requirements.

#### **Know which way is up.**

The orientation of the address on a printed piece is critical. Incorrect orientation can even render a piece unmailable. Understand first that your content has nothing to do with top and bottom. The post office defines “top” very clearly for us:

- Bound books: If your piece has a bound edge, the “top” is the top half of the piece when it is held with the bound edge to the right. You may orient the indicia and address so they are right-reading this way, or when the piece is rotated 90 degrees clockwise, putting the bound edge towards mother earth and the “top” (yes, it is still the “top”) to the right.
- Folded pieces: Address must be parallel to the longer dimension of the piece. The address should fall within a 4" deep strip along the bottom length.
- Special rule for flats: The edge perpendicular to the bound or folded edge cannot exceed 12." In other words, 12" x 12" or 12" x 15" (bound the 15" way) are okay, but 15" x 12" (bound the 12" way) is not.

#### **Plan for new wafer-sealing regulations in September.**

The post office is revising requirements for letter-size bound pieces, effective September 8, 2009, requiring two 1 ½" tabs on one edge and one on another for most self-mailers. This cannot be accomplished in a single pass on most mailing equipment in use today, and could add significant expense and time to your project. Insertion into an envelope may well be the best solution, at least for the short term, for many projects.

To avoid surprises, talk to your RR Donnelley sales representative early in the design of any self-mailing piece.

**A few last tips to keep at hand:**

- For best rates, BRC's must be between 3 ½" x 5" and 4 ½" x 6," have an aspect ratio between 1.3 and 2.5, and be between .007" and .016" in thickness.
- 3.3 ounces is an effective maximum for machine rates for most pieces. Plan carefully and consult with an expert if you are over or near this weight.
- Don't exceed ¼" thickness.
- Leave a Bar Code Clear Zone 5/8" high and 4 ¾" wide in the bottom right corner of your mail panel.
- Avoid shrink-wraps, poly-wraps, clasps, strings, buttons or other protrusions.
- Inserting a DVD or other media? Investigate special flexibility requirements that may come into play.
- Already built a sailboat in the basement? Some mailing services still offer Cheshire labels that may cover your goof-up with this 1" x 3" low-tech lifesaver.

**Here are a few helpful web addresses:**

Find contact information for the USPS mail design analyst for your area at:

[pe.usps.gov/mpdesign/mpdfr\\_mda\\_lookup.asp](http://pe.usps.gov/mpdesign/mpdfr_mda_lookup.asp)

Predict your postal rate at this USPS web site:

[dbcalc.usps.gov](http://dbcalc.usps.gov)

**Next TipLine: Author's altercations! Avoid stress and unbudgeted expenses by dodging these three common errors in presented art.**

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