



## Harnessing Human Behavior

### 13 Techniques that Make Your Direct Marketing Impossible to Ignore

You can have a great offer, customized creative, and a targeted message. Yet you may still be ignored. That's because when people encounter direct mail, they often react in ways that have less to do with the marketing message in front of them and more to do with basic human behavior. The following are 13 principles that govern human reactions. They suggest 13 techniques that we as direct marketers can embed in our creative to increase the likelihood that our target will choose to engage with us.

- 1. People respect authority.**  
Design packages to look serious and official.
- 2. Humans are naturally curious.**  
Make your mail unusual, intriguing, or different.
- 3. Gatekeepers make very deliberate assumptions.**  
Appear valuable, important, customized, or requested.
- 4. People look at who and where mail is from and how it was mailed.** Leverage your corner card and postage areas.
- 5. We're inclined to touch things.**  
Build interactivity into your piece.
- 6. Our eyes gravitate to certain words.**  
Liberally use "eye magnet" words. Such as, "Free," "easy," and "you" to name a few.
- 7. "No" really can mean "tell me more."** Address buying barriers head-on.
- 8. Some responses are automatic.**  
Build in compliance triggers.
- 9. People are most interested in themselves.** Focus on your target, not your product/company.
- 10. People make decisions for rational and emotional reasons.**  
Sell with emotion; justify with reason.
- 11. People feel obligated.**  
Use the reciprocity principle.
- 12. We want what we cannot have.**  
Use the scarcity principle.
- 13. We do what people like us — and people we like — do.**  
Leverage the principle of social proof.