

# Using 3-3-3 rule

By TRENTON HIGHTOWER

To get your company's marketing materials opened, consider the 3-3-3 rule.

The first "3" pertains to the three words about mailings to always remember: appearance is everything.

Think about it. Each of us receives dozens of pieces of mail at our homes and offices every day-- that's hundreds of pieces every single week!

The second 3? Three seconds. That's all the recipient spends looking at the outside of your mailing. Research shows that most will trash it after 3-5 seconds if it doesn't catch their eye for some reason. Take a few extra minutes to make sure your mailer stands out in the crowd—it's well

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## Curriculum vitae

Trenton Hightower is the associate vice president of FCC/JTA customized training at Frederick Community College. In addition, he has completed "Train the Trainer" courses in the following areas: Using the Malcolm Baldrige by Kodak, Dale Carnegie sales course, Xerox strategic planning process, systems curriculum and instructional development by OSU (certified), Ziglar Education Systems, and DDI certification. Mr. Hightower has a Bachelor's in communication/public relations and Master's in administration of higher education.

## Hightower: Getting most in marketing

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worth the effort.

Try the following to make the most of the 3 seconds of attention the outside of your mailing gets:

■ Avoid using plain envelopes—a colored mailer suggests customization.

■ Use the cleanest, most up-to-date mailing list possible. Misspelled names and outdated titles are going to land your piece right in the trash.

■ Consider hand-addressing smaller mailings, but make sure the script is legible and professional. Childish handwriting is worse than a computer-generated label.

■ Affix labels carefully. Something as small as a crooked mailing label speaks volumes about the organization sending it. Remember, appearance is everything.

■ Use stamps, or a first-class indicia. Bulk mailings get the attention they deserve: none.

■ Include a slogan or tagline to the return address. Research shows most recipients at least glance at the upper left hand cor-

ner of an envelope. Take advantage of that. For example, Hyper-Responsive Marketing, Techniques for Getting 100 Clients in 100 Days, 101 S. Church St., Frederick, MD 21701 has a good chance of getting your envelope opened. Adding a toll-free number or web address also adds credibility.

■ Add what the pros call a "teaser" to the envelope. Something like The contents of this envelope will change your life may just pique a prospective customer's interest.

Congratulations! Your marketing mailing got opened. So what's the third 3? Research shows your opened mailer has approximately 3 minutes to make an impact. That's why it's important to make every word in the first paragraph of your letter count. Streamline it, use action verbs and focus on results and benefits. The ever-popular WIIFM (What's In It For Me) remains one of the best sales techniques.

■ Personalize however possible. Always sign your letters, and take a few minutes whenever possible to add a hand-written note.

■ If your mailer includes a tear-off, pay special attention to what information responders will lose when they return it. Avoid listing crucial information on the back. Make sure the flip-side of a tear-off has something like a testimonial on the back. Never let your prospect lose your phone number, Web address or the date, time and location of the event or course.

■ Research also shows that a reader's eye falls naturally to a P.S. below the signature. Recap your most important point, and repeat your call to action here.

Consider calling or emailing the recipients ahead of time to give them a heads-up. Introduce yourself and say something short and to-the-point—let them know a mailing worth opening is on the way.

Increase your chances of getting noticed in a sea of bulk mail even more by sending envelope free mailers, like oversized post-cards.

Focus on visual impact, short effective copy and an easy to-call-to-action...and get your mailings noticed!