

5 Reply Mail

Basic Information

If your business receives most of its orders and payments by mail, your business depends financially on its incoming mail. Orders and payments are usually a response to a mailing to customers, which is why these responses are called reply mail.

Naturally, you want to get as many responses as you can, as quickly as you can. And the Postal Service wants to help you do just that. By using special reply mail formats and features, you can increase responses and receive them sooner.

Choosing Reply Mail Type

Basic Types

There are two basic types of reply mail—business reply mail (BRM) and courtesy reply mail (CRM)—and several specialized varieties. Although BRM and CRM are similar, there is a significant difference.

Business Reply Mail

Business reply mail (BRM) requires that postage be paid by you (the sender) if your customer (the respondent) mails the reply back to you. BRM is appropriate when your customer needs a little extra inducement to reply—in other words, the response or its timing is not assured. This type of reply mail is frequently used by direct marketers seeking orders, researchers pursuing questionnaire responses, or magazine publishers soliciting subscriptions (see Exhibit 5-1).

The extra inducement is provided because your customer does not need to affix the return postage, does not have to supply a postcard or envelope, and does not need to put an address on the mailpiece. Exhibit 5-1 shows a standard BRM piece in postcard and envelope formats.

Courtesy Reply Mail

Courtesy reply mail (CRM) requires your customer (the respondent) to affix the postage before mailing the reply back to you (the sender). CRM is appropriate when the response is more or less assured, such as for billings (see Exhibit 5-2).

Although the customer usually pays the return postage (unless you prepay it by a meter, as in meter reply mail (MRM)), the preaddressed postcard or envelope add convenience and ensures addressing accuracy. Exhibit 5-2 shows a standard CRM piece in postcard and envelope formats.

Exhibit 5-1
BRM Postcard and Envelope
(not drawn to scale)

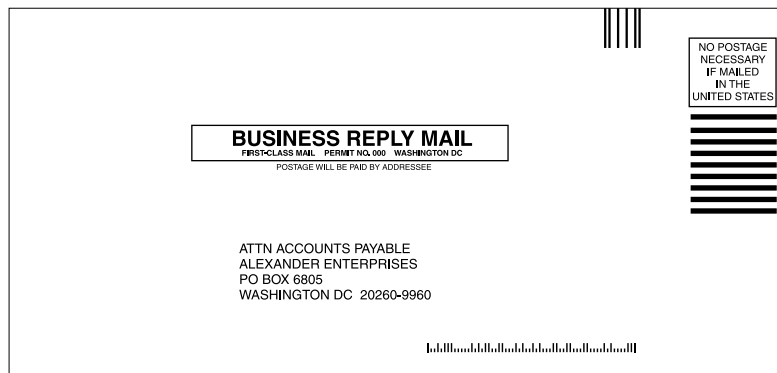
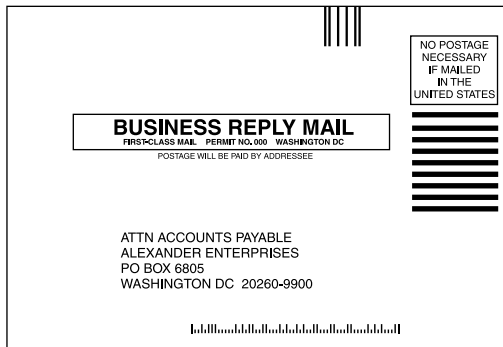
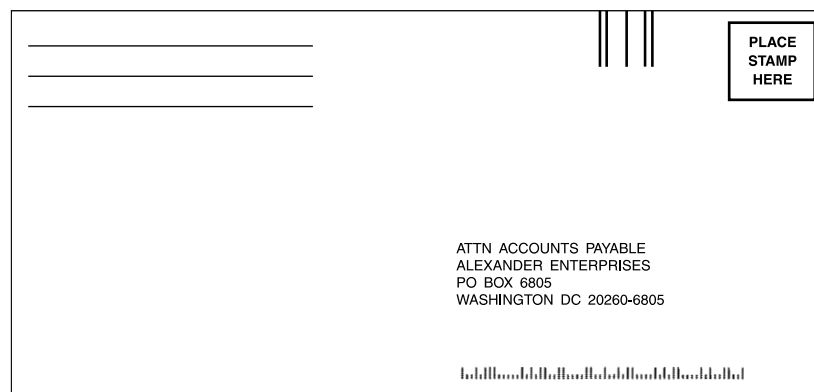
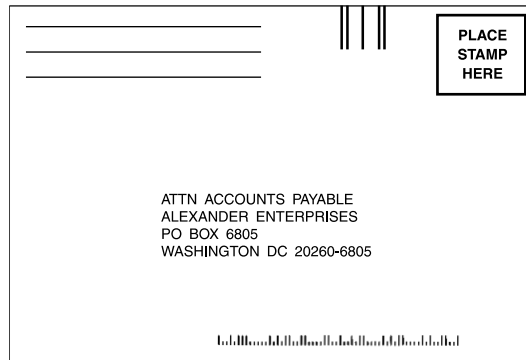


Exhibit 5-2
CRM Postcard and Envelope
(not drawn to scale)



Benefiting From Reply Mail

Reply mail offers two major advantages: faster response and more accurate delivery.

The easier you make it for your customer to respond, the quicker the return will come. A preaddressed (and perhaps postage-paid) envelope containing the customer's order or check is easy to mail. Customers have positive attitudes about creditors, marketers, and fund-raisers who show foresight and consideration by providing reply mail cards, envelopes, or labels.

With BRM and CRM, your address is preprinted. This is especially important when you want payments and inquiries directed to an address that is different from your usual mailing address.

Because there is no chance that your customer can misaddress the mail to you, you eliminate potential misdeliveries. By using POSTNET barcodes on the envelopes—Chapter 6 explains how—you make sure that your reply mail benefits fully from USPS automated sorting equipment.