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## **A Test to Determine the Relative Effectiveness of Different Styles, Colors, and Return Order Solicitation Methods in Sales Letters**

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Donald S. Wakefield entitled "A Test to Determine the Relative Effectiveness of Different Styles, Colors, and Return Order Solicitation Methods in Sales Letters." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Education.

Louis T. Hawk, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

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Accepted for the Council:

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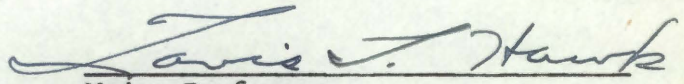
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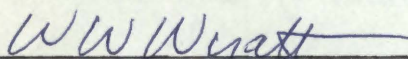
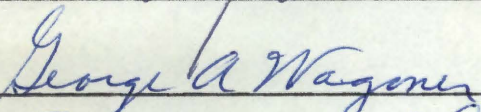
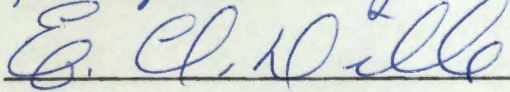
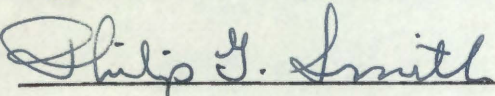
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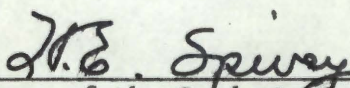
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Donald S. <sup>COXX</sup>Wakefield entitled "A Test to Determine the Relative Effectiveness of Different Styles, Colors, and Return Order Solicitation Methods in Sales Letters." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Curriculum and Instruction.

  
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

  
Dean of the Graduate School

A TEST TO DETERMINE THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT STYLES,  
COLORS, AND RETURN ORDER SOLICITATION METHODS  
IN SALES LETTERS

33

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
The University of Tennessee

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by

Donald S. Wakefield

August 1961

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
The Problem . . . . .	5
Sub-problems . . . . .	5
Hypotheses . . . . .	7
Assumptions . . . . .	9
Methods of Procedure . . . . .	10
Scope and Limitations . . . . .	11
Definition of Terms . . . . .	12
False heading . . . . .	13
Form 3547 . . . . .	13
Hanging indentation . . . . .	13
Marginal message . . . . .	13
Need for the Study . . . . .	13
The Product Being Sold . . . . .	15
Related Studies . . . . .	17
Organization of the Study . . . . .	18
II. A SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE . . . . .	20
The sales letter formula . . . . .	20
Style in sales letters . . . . .	28
Length of sales letters . . . . .	30
Mailing dates . . . . .	33
Color in sales letters . . . . .	35

CHAPTER	PAGE
Return order solicitation methods . . . . .	38
Expected returns . . . . .	39
III. METHODS AND PROCEDURE . . . . .	41
The letter . . . . .	41
Preparation of the mailing . . . . .	44
Selection of recipients . . . . .	45
Mailing . . . . .	50
Recording the data . . . . .	52
Statistical treatment of the data . . . . .	52
IV. RESULTS . . . . .	54
Hypotheses 1 and 2 . . . . .	54
Hypothesis 3 . . . . .	58
Hypothesis 4 . . . . .	59
V. SUMMARY . . . . .	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	63
APPENDIX . . . . .	69

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Code Numbers Assigned Thirty Combinations of Style, Color, and Return Order Solicitation Methods in 1800 Sales Letters . . . . .	46
II. Number of Letters Mailed in Each of 30 Code Number Classifications . . . . .	47
III. Distribution of Orders Received from 1800 Sales Letters by Style, Color, Return Order Method and Code Number Classi- fication . . . . .	55



LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Percentage of Hours of Daily Sunlight in Various Areas of the United States . . . . .	49
2. Time Required for Delivery of Mail from Knoxville, Tennessee, to Various Parts of the United States . . . . .	51



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Little graduate research has been done in the field of business communications. For years the American Business Writing Association (ABWA) asked that it be notified of any such research, but little master's level and no doctoral level research was forthcoming until the past four or five years. In the specific area of direct mail there appears to have been even less.

↓ The direct mail industry has done far too little research. In a paper read before the 1959 ABWA Convention at Beverly Hills, California, Professor Virgil E. Harder of the University of Washington said, "Too often the tendency in direct mail is to wait for someone else to find the answers. In relation to other advertising media, direct mail has the dubious distinction of being the second largest in terms of number of dollars spent on the use of the medium, yet least in terms of the number of dollars spent on research."<sup>1</sup>

↑ A veteran of direct mail advertising is quoted as saying, "There is very little cross-fertilization of ideas in the area of direct mail research. People find out new ways and techniques of doing things but will not share methods or results. I guess everybody would rather see everybody else keep on doing a bad job."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Virgil E. Harder, "Direct Mail--Where on the Horizon?" The ABWA Bulletin, XXIV (February, 1960), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>"Direct Mail: Finding New Growth, New Status," Printer's Ink, LIVGCC (January 27, 1961), p. 32.

Many of the statistics published in support of direct mail practices are surveys of practices rather than tests of best practices. As an example, a 1947 survey of two hundred advertising managers revealed that 30 per cent of them considered color in the letterhead most effective, while 19 per cent favored colored stock.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the statements concerning effective practices are made without any record of research to back them up. One example is "A separate order card or envelope will outpull one, even if perforated, which is part of a letter or promotion piece."<sup>4</sup> Robert Stone says that the "order or reply form . . . is the most logical to use for most direct mail presentations."<sup>5</sup> But, which is better?

In the use of color there are many unverified statements to be found. An example is, "In mail order selling, color will outpull black and white anywhere from 6 to 1 to 15 to 1."<sup>6</sup> Robert Stone has said, "The use of color in paper and ink influences direct mail returns from 3.2 per cent to 450 per cent."<sup>7</sup> In a speech before the ABWA in 1948 Harry Latz,

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<sup>3</sup>The Direct Mail Advertising Association, The DMAA 1947 Research Report (New York: Direct Mail Advertising Association, 1947), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>George Timothy Clarke, Copywriting: Theory and Practice (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), pp. 331-32.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Stone, Successful Direct Mail Advertising and Selling (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 114.

<sup>6</sup>Faber Birren, Selling Color to People (New York: University Books, 1956), p. 84.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Stone, Profitable Direct Mail Methods (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1947), p. 33.

Manager of the Hotel New Yorker, said that pink, blue, and yellow out-pulled white letterheads in sales letters.<sup>8</sup> But, why those colors? How much better? And, how did he know?

Textbook writers offer several choices of letter styles. Menning and Wilkinson use such examples as (1) indented with closed punctuation; (2) blocked with closed punctuation; (3) simplified pure block; and (4) standard line.<sup>9</sup> The National Office Management Association has endorsed another style for business letters that omits the salutation and complimentary close.

Robert Stone lists nine different formats for sales letters, but he does not mention style.<sup>10</sup> In an ABWA article in October, 1954, John P. Riebel of the California State Polytechnic College advocated use of what he calls "salutopenings and complendings."<sup>11</sup> The investigator has found no recorded research dealing with the relative effectiveness of various letter styles.

Writers appear to agree completely on a few factors in direct mail advertising. One is that sales letters should arrive in the middle of the week. Clarke has said, "Mailings that are timed to reach prospects toward the middle of the week outpull those that are not so timed."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Harry Latz, "Better Writing for Business," The ABWA Bulletin (February, 1948), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> J. H. Menning and C. W. Wilkinson, Writing Business Letters (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1955), pp. 71-76.

<sup>10</sup> Stone, Successful Direct Mail Advertising and Selling, op. cit., pp. 119-130.

<sup>11</sup> John P. Riebel, "Salutopenings and Complendings," The ABWA Bulletin, XIX (October, 1954), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Clarke, op. cit., p. 330.

Seventy-five per cent of the two hundred advertising managers polled by The Direct Mail Advertising Association in 1947 thought that letters should arrive on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.<sup>13</sup> Stone says, ". . . it is best to have your mail arrive on days when the mail is the lightest. Your mail will usually get more attention if it is received on Friday rather than on Monday."<sup>14</sup> Harry Latz said in an ABWA article that Tuesday and Wednesday were the best days for sales letter to arrive.<sup>15</sup>

Another commonly accepted idea is that sales letters should (1) get attention, (2) hold attention, and (3) get action. These steps have been called variously, "Star, Chain, and Hook,"<sup>16</sup> "AIDA" (Attention, interest, desire, and action), and other aid-to-memory names. Regardless of the title given the elements of the sales letter, they must have certain basic characteristics. Here again there is not complete agreement as to the terminology or description, but there is no apparent disagreement on essential characteristics. These characteristics are often called the "C's," and the list may include from as few as three to as many as ten desirable characteristics. One of the most elaborate of these lists is the basis for the title of Riebel and Roberts' book, Ten Commandments for Writing Letters That Get Results.<sup>17</sup> The "commandments" with which they are

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<sup>13</sup>The Direct Mail Advertising Association, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>14</sup>Stone, Profitable Direct Mail Methods, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>15</sup>Helen Recknagel, "Selling Hotel Services by Mail," The ABWA Bulletin, XXI (November, 1956), p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>C. E. Frailey and Edith L. Schnell, Practical Business Writing (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 27.

<sup>17</sup>John P. Riebel and Donald R. Roberts, Ten Commandments for Writing Letters That Get Results (New London, Connecticut: Printers' Ink Books, 1957), p. 5.

concerned are clarity, conciseness, completeness, correctness, courtesy, consideration for the reader, cheerfulness, and the conversational and convincing tone of the letters. This research was designed and conducted in an effort to obtain answers to some of the controversial questions concerning sales letters by testing the effectiveness of an experimental mailing.

## I. THE PROBLEM

The purposes of this study were to determine the relative effectiveness of four different sales letter styles, the relative effectiveness of five different letterhead colors in sales letters, the relative effectiveness of two different order return forms, and the relative effectiveness of different colors in relation to percentage of sunlight in those areas where letters were received.

### Sub-problems

The study involved the following sub-problems:

1. Securing an adequate mailing list. According to Clarke, mailing lists may be developed from any of these sources: "Telephone and other general directories, or from a special activity or a single industry, some of which give full names and titles; mailing-list houses and printing houses; trade-paper magazine publishers; trade association directories and other cooperative groups; inquiries received through advertising; exchange of lists with non-competing organizations; clippings and news items from various publications; company records, salesmen's reports, and the like; lists of distributors; names collected by investigators and research people; various public and government records,

such as building permits, registries of deeds, tax information, automobile registrations; organization lists, such as purchasing agents . . . .<sup>18</sup>

2. Selecting the recipient of each letter. According to Croxton and Cowden, any of the following methods could have been used to select recipients of each letter:

a. Random sample. Place the names of all prospects on slips of paper and draw them from a receptacle at "random."

b. Systematic sample. Mail to every nth name on the list.

c. Cluster sample. Select on the basis of geographic location and deliberately allocate letters to all areas.

d. Stratified sample. Deliberately sampling each strata or classification according to size of operation of prospective companies.

e. Random point sample. Locating a point on the map and sending one letter of each kind into that area.<sup>19</sup>

And still another possibility was that of consecutively numbering each firm name on the accepted list and selecting from a table of random numbers which firm should be the recipient of each letter.<sup>20</sup>

3. Treating the data statistically.

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<sup>18</sup>Clarke, op. cit., p. 334.

<sup>19</sup>Frederick E. Croxton and Dudley J. Cowden, Applied General Statistics (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), pp. 26-31.

<sup>20</sup>Frances G. Cornell, The Essentials of Educational Statistics (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1956), pp. 119-20.

## II. HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were advanced:

1. No statistically significant differences in sales will result from the use of different styles in sales letters. Although no record of research in this area could be found, certain related ideas would seem to indicate the possibility of letter style influencing effectiveness. If you are to "talk to him (the prospect) as you would if you were face to face,"<sup>21</sup> as Sandage and Fryburger say, then some letter styles have a more "face to face" character than others. Since the ability to get attention is a primary characteristic of the good sales letter, some styles should get attention more easily than others. Stone says, "write as you talk,"<sup>22</sup> and "the letter writer should count on the first ten words in a letter to make his impression."<sup>23</sup> The omission of a salutation could be considered more conversational and should then make a better impression on the reader.

Reibel advocates a letter he calls "Salutopenings and Complendings."<sup>24</sup> Since it is somewhat new and unusual, this style should be effective as an attention getter.

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<sup>21</sup>C. H. Sandage and Vernon Fryburger, Advertising Theory and Practice (Homewood, Illinois: Richard S. Irwin, Inc., 1958), p. 482.

<sup>22</sup>Stone, Profitable Direct Mail Methods, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>24</sup>John P. Reibel, "Salutopenings and Complendings," The ABWA Bulletin, XIX (October, 1954), p. 4.

2. No statistically significant differences will result from the use of different letterhead colors in sales letters. Birren,<sup>25</sup> Stone,<sup>26</sup> and Latz<sup>27</sup> all emphasize the importance of color, but they do not say which colors are best. Clarke says, "Color adds realism, attracts attention, lends prestige, gives intensity," but he gives no indication of which color is best. Sandage and Fryburger say "Color influences the emotional behavior of individuals."<sup>28</sup> If so, the use of different colors should cause different reactions to the same sales letters.

3. No statistically significant differences in sales will result from the use of different order return forms in sales letters. Clarke<sup>29</sup> and Stone<sup>30</sup> discuss post cards, return envelopes, and order return forms, but do not specify which is best. Schutte and Steinberg say, "It is often profitable to include a business reply card."<sup>31</sup> They do not mention return envelopes as an alternative. Graham says, "A reply card or envelope is enclosed to facilitate response,"<sup>32</sup> but he does not specify which is preferred. Smart, McKelvey, and Gerfen say, "A postage-paid reply card

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<sup>25</sup>Birren, loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup>Stone, Profitable Direct Mail Methods, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>27</sup>Harry Latz, loc. cit.

<sup>28</sup>Sandage and Fryburger, op. cit., p. 354

<sup>29</sup>Clarke, op. cit., pp. 331-332

<sup>30</sup>Stone, Profitable Direct Mail Methods, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>31</sup>William M. Schute and Erwin R. Steinberg, Communication in Business and Industry (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 304.

<sup>32</sup>Irving Graham, Advertising Campaigns (New York: Harper Bros., 1951), p. 153.



or envelope is almost always enclosed with the sales letter,<sup>33</sup> but they too fail to specify a preference.

4. No significant differences in sales will result in different geographic areas from the use of different letterhead colors in those different areas. Curiosity concerning the possibility of a difference in sales resulting from different colors in various geographic areas was aroused by the following statement by Birren: "Color preference tends to depend on amount of sunlight--the more sun the more appeal a bright color has--the less sun the more appeal is found in softer colors--blue and green are preferred."<sup>34</sup> If this statement is true, the use of bright colored letterhead in areas of high percentages of sunlight should produce better results than softer colors, and vice versa.

### III. ASSUMPTIONS

1. All recipients of the letters used in the study were equally good prospects.
2. No recipient of the letters had a prior knowledge of the product.
3. The text of the sales letters used in the study would be effective enough to produce measurable results.
4. The majority of returns would be received in 45 days.
5. The recipients of the letters were a representative sampling of the total list of potential recipients.

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<sup>33</sup>Walter Kay Smart, Louis William McKelvey, and Richard Conrad Gerfen, Business Letters (New York: Harper Bros., 1957), p. 363.

<sup>34</sup>Birren, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

6. No factors other than style, color, return order method, or percentage of sunlight in the area in which the letter was received would influence the results of the study.

#### IV. METHODS OF PROCEDURE

The data for the study were obtained from tabulation and comparison of the orders for KWIK & EZEE battery lifters resulting from sales letters mailed to 1800 randomly selected battery manufacturers and jobbers. The mailing list of battery manufacturers and jobbers from which the random selection was made was obtained from Jobber Topics Annual Directory and Buyers Guide.<sup>35</sup>

The 1800 letters were allocated as follows:

1. Six hundred letters of three styles were written.
2. Each style contained 120 letters each on white, red, yellow, blue, and green letterheads.
3. One-half (sixty) of the letters on each color letterhead contained a return envelope; the other half contained a return post card.

The names of the firms who were to receive the letters were selected from a table of random numbers. The letter was written by the researcher, and an attempt was made to incorporate the characteristics of a good sales letter--attention, interest, desire, and action. The letters were multilithed. Each letter contained a multilithed return envelope or post card and price sheet, and a multigraphed catalog sheet.

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<sup>35</sup>Jobber Topics Annual Directory and Buyers Guide (Chicago: Irving Cloud Publications, 1959), pp. 3D-96D.

All letters were mailed at a time computed to enhance their chances of arrival on a Tuesday.

A letter was considered effective if an order was received from its recipient for any quantity of KWIK & EZEE battery lifters within forty-five days of the date computed for its arrival plus the time necessary for the order to be returned to the seller. When such an order was received, a card was prepared, listing the name of the firm, the address, the kind of letter combination that had secured the order, the size of the order, and the percentage of sunlight in the area from which the order came.

Upon expiration of the established time limit for the last allowable return order, the ones received were compiled for statistical treatment. Analysis of variance was used in the treatment of the data concerning relative effectiveness of various styles and letterhead colors. A T test was used to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the effectiveness of postcards and return envelopes. A Z test was used to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the effectiveness of warm colors (yellow and pink) and cool colors (blue and green) in areas of different percentages of sunlight.

## V. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

All data in this study were obtained by mailing sales letters from Liberty Tire and Battery Supply, Inc., 23 Emory Park, Knoxville, Tennessee, to 1800 battery manufacturers and jobbers throughout the United States.

Although the best arrival time for sales letters is the middle of the week, the exact arrival time could not be controlled. Mail delays

and erratic deliveries could have some uncontrolled effect on the results of the study.

Unknown seasonal demand variations may exist from one geographic area to another. This factor could also have influenced the outcome of the study. Color preferences, too, may vary from season to season, and the findings for one season might not apply to another.

The difference was in shipping costs--another uncontrollable factor. Since the price quotation on the product being sold was F.O.B Knoxville, Tennessee, the total cost including freight was greater for those firms some distance away than the nearer ones.

Orders could arrive after the deadline date set up in the study and thus not count in the final results. Experience has shown that orders for the product sometime arrive as long as five and six months after sales letters are mailed. For the sake of expediency, however, some deadline date had to be established.

The mailing list used was compiled by Irving Cloud Publications, and only the names of firms who were members of the Automotive Warehouse Dealers Association were listed.<sup>36</sup> Thus no battery manufacturers or jobber who was not a member of that organization had a chance of being included in the study.

## VI. DEFINITION OF TERMS

In order to avoid confusion in the meanings of the special terms used in this study, the following definitions are given:

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

False heading

Statement or attention-getting message in the upper left portion of the letter in the place usually occupied by the salutation.

Form 3547

A. U. S. Postal Department code number that indicates the willingness of the mailer to pay a fee to the Postal Department for either returning undelivered mail or a special card with an explanation for the letter's non-delivery and the correct address of the addressee, if known.

Hanging indentation

A style in which the first line of every paragraph is started at the left margin of the letter and all subsequent lines are indented.

Marginal message

A style used in this study that presented, down the left margin of each page of the letter, a brief summary of the material on that page.

## VII. NEED FOR THE STUDY

As previously stated, little research has been done in the area of direct mail. Some of the controversy and lack of specificity has been quoted. Many answers are non-existent. Relative effectiveness of various colors, styles, and return order solicitation methods do not seem to be common knowledge. Many unverified statements have been made. The value of color seems to be fairly well accepted, but as to which colors specifically and their implications for direct mail, many answers are missing.

Style is almost always discussed in business writing texts. Examples are given. Sales letters are discussed also. But no text was found that combined the two subjects and made specific suggestions as to the best style for sales letters. No reviewed text mentioned the use of color in sales letters.

The teaching of sales letters is important. Dr. Robert D. Hay, University of Arkansas, conducted a survey of former students in 1949, in an effort to determine what type of business letter writing training had benefited them most. Of those replying, thirty-two per cent indicated that they had benefited most from training in the writing of sales letters, and forty-two per cent indicated that training in promotion and good will letters had been most helpful to them.<sup>37</sup> The nature of promotion and good will letters was not explained, but apparently there was a great deal of similarity between "sales" and "promotion" letters. If such was the case, then the majority of the former students had benefited most from the sales type letter training. If additional information can be obtained by this study that will make such training more effective, it will have been a worth-while effort.

The proposed study should make a contribution in a much needed area of research by combining some scattered bits of information concerning style, color, and return order solicitation methods and determine their particular implications for sales letters.

The information gained from the study would also add to the existing body of knowledge in the field and be of some value to those writing about, teaching, or using sales letters.

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<sup>37</sup> Lawrence Freeman, "Do We and Our Textbooks Over-Emphasize Sales Letters?" The ABWA Bulletin (October, 1951), p. 10.

## VIII. THE PRODUCT BEING SOLD

The product being promoted was the KWIK & EZEE battery lifter, patented and manufactured by Machine Products Company, Route 11, Knoxville, Tennessee, and distributed exclusively by Liberty Tire and Battery Supply, Inc., 23 Emory Park, Knoxville, Tennessee.

The KWIK & EZEE battery lifter is a patented hand tool, used for lifting and carrying automotive batteries. It is classified as a rigid type battery lifter--as opposed to a flexible type. The rigid type lifter is constructed of steel and wood, and it adjusts to fit various length batteries and different sizes of battery posts.

The flexible lifter is a webbed strap with metal plates attached to each end. The metal plates each have an oblong hole that fits over different size battery posts. The flexibility of the strap allows it to be used for lifting various length batteries.

The rigid battery lifter is a good deal more expensive than the flexible type. But it has the advantages of (1) durability, (2) it fits a greater variety of battery and post sizes, (3) it is safer (less likelihood of allowing batteries to drop), (4) it is easier to use (a one-hand operation as opposed to two with the flexible lifter), and (5) it does not cause discomfort to the hand of the user as does the flexible lifter.

Although the KWIK & EZEE battery lifter sells to the jobber and other large-lot purchasers for approximately five times as much as flexible lifters, it costs them less than half as much as other rigid lifters on the American market. Thus the KWIK & EZEE is in a good competitive position pricewise, and all automotive jobbers sell some kind of battery

lifter. For three years Liberty Tire & Battery Supply had been successfully retailing it to its tire and battery accounts. Repeat sales to the same users during this period and repeat sales to the same buyers by both Machine Products Company and Liberty Tire & Battery Supply seemed to indicate that the product was both useful and saleable.

From 1954, when it was first offered for sale, until 1959, the KWIK and EZEE battery lifter was sold by Machine Products Company through manufacturers representatives in forty-eight states and shipped directly to a few scattered accounts throughout the country.

In February of 1959, Liberty Tire & Battery Supply secured exclusive distributorship rights of the lifter from Machine Products Company. At that time the price was increased, resulting in the loss of some customers. All exclusive territory rights were taken from the manufacturers representatives, resulting in further reduction in the number of established customers.

The corporation decided to attempt distribution by direct mail. A mailing list of auto parts houses was purchased from W. S. Ponton Company, Washington, D. C. Sales letters were mailed to the first 2000 firms whose names appeared on that list. Some sales resulted, but the overall results were disappointing. A list of one hundred and twenty battery jobbers was secured in confidence from a battery manufacturer, and a sales letter was mailed to each firm on that list. The results were quite gratifying.

A decision was made to make a more aggressive attempt to solicit battery manufacturers and jobbers because (1) of the success of the small



mailing to battery jobbers, (2) examination of the active accounts revealed that the preponderance of them were battery manufacturers and jobbers, and (3) the corporation had enjoyed a record of success in retailing and jobbing the KWIK & EZEE lifter in the years prior to obtaining exclusive distributorship rights.

No method other than sales letters had ever been used in promoting sales of the KWIK & EZEE battery lifters outside the immediate retail and wholesale area covered by Liberty Tire & Battery Supply.

#### IX. RELATED STUDIES

Only one graduate study in the area of direct mail was found--that of Virgil E. Harder at the University of Illinois in 1958.<sup>38</sup> The purpose of the Harder study was to trace the history and development of direct mail advertising. He considered only historical aspects of the media and was not concerned with the "how-to-do-it" phases of copy and/or layout.

Harder did, however, indicate that testing and research have slowly increased and that basic guides or formulas have evolved to help the less initiated users of direct mail. On the other hand, he emphasized that unless formats and ideas were changed frequently, they became drab and lifeless. Too much following of formulas, he says, destroys the most effective aspect of direct mail--its selectiveness.

The need for more concentration on direct mail by education is pointed out. Harder quotes Professor John T. Maquire (University of Illinois) as saying in 1953, "Few schools put much emphasis on direct mail.

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<sup>38</sup>Virgil E. Harder, "A History of Direct Mail Advertising" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, University of Illinois, Champaign, 1958).

Usually it occupies a very small niche in some other course. A complete direct mail course is a rarity." And Hoke, commenting on progress in direct mail education in 1956, is quoted by Harder as saying:

Little progress. Several schools, such as the University of Illinois, are diligently working on summer schools. Too many advertising teachers when asked, "How much emphasis is placed on direct mail in your classes?" reply, "Not too much." The situation won't change much until pressure is applied to turn out more competent people who know direct mail fundamentals.

One other study was listed in a direct mail reference list used by the researcher. It was:

Peck, Charles E. A Study of Characteristics Common to Successful Letters Used in Connection with Direct Mail. Master's thesis, University of Iowa (date unknown).

An attempt was made to obtain this study through Inter-Library Loan. The University of Iowa reported that the study "could not be identified."

#### X. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is organized into five chapters, a bibliography, and an appendix.

Chapter I consists of an introduction, a statement of the problem, the hypotheses advanced in the study, the assumptions made, a description of the methods and procedures used, the scope and limitations of the study, definitions of terms used in the study, the need for the study, a discussion of the product being sold, and a review of graduate research that related to the study.

Chapter II consists of a review of published material that related to the study.

Chapter III contains a detailed presentation of the methods and procedures employed in conducting the research for the study.

Chapter IV consists of a presentation of the results of the study and an explanation of the statistical methods used in the treatment of data.

The Appendix contains samples of the various letter styles, letter-head colors, return post cards, and return envelopes used in the study.

## CHAPTER II

### A SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

In order to gain insight into and a broad background of knowledge of the field of direct mail selling, a survey of the related literature was made. The researcher hoped to profit from the experience of experts in the field, determine areas of agreement and disagreement, and isolate areas for needed research. Many suggestions and ideas presented in books and periodicals were incorporated into the preparation and conduct of the research. Although many of them were not considered feasible and disagreements between various writers prevented inclusion of all ideas, they did add to the researcher's knowledge of the subject and enhance the over-all value of the study.

The material gathered from the survey of literature was broken down into various classifications as it pertained to different aspects of the research problem--the letter formula, style, color, etc. The material is presented in the following pages.

#### The Sales Letter Formula

A summary of the various formulas for writing sales letters is presented in a University of Illinois Bulletin, "How to Use the Mails for Sales."<sup>1</sup> The formulas presented are AIDA (Attention, interest, desire, action); be dramatic, descriptive, persuasive, and clinching; AIDPPA

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<sup>1</sup>University of Illinois, "How to Use the Mails for Sales" (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, May, 1954), pp. 16-24.

(attention, interest, descriptive, persuade, proof, action); PPPP (picture, promise, proof, push); and what is termed a "general" formula:

1. Write with the ease with which you talk.
2. Learn your letter writing faults.
3. Remember the four essentials of a good letter: clearness, brevity, courtesy, and believability.
4. Read your letter aloud. Then rewrite it if it doesn't ring true.

The sixth formula in this series is called the Egner Formula:

1. Write a headline (or first paragraph) to evoke desire as well as get attention.
2. Add an inspirational lead-in.
3. Give a clear definition of the product.
4. Tell a success story about the use of the product.
5. Include testimonials and endorsements from satisfied customers.
6. List the special features of the product.
7. Make a statement of the value to the purchaser.
8. Devise an action closer that will make the reader want to buy immediately.
9. Conclude with a P. S. rephrasing the headline.

L. E. Frailey says the good letter interests, explains, and persuades.<sup>2</sup>

Hagar, Stewart, and Hutchinson<sup>3</sup> offer an expansion of this idea by saying in the following formula:

1. Get in touch with the reader, make him want to read the rest of the letter.
2. Create or strengthen desire.

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<sup>2</sup>L. E. Frailey, Smooth Sailing Letters (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1938), pp. 65-66.

<sup>3</sup>Hubert A. Hagar, Marie M. Stewart, and Lillian Hutchinson, Business English and Letter Writing (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1953), pp. 194-150.

3. Convince the reader that it would be to his advantage to purchase.
4. Get action.

In his Direct Mail Advertising Training Program, Henry Hoke listed nine elements of a good sales letter:<sup>4</sup>

1. The headline--desire and attention.
2. Inspirational lead-in--justify headline, develop the theme, dramatize the headline.
3. Definition of the product--emphasize name and describe.
4. Success story.
5. Testimonials--include whenever possible (not appropriate with narrative style).
6. Special features--selling points.
7. Definite statement of value.
8. Specify urgent action.
9. P. S.

Collier<sup>5</sup> offers no formula as such, but he incorporates the following "essentials" in his examples: opening, description or explanation, motive for buying, proof, penalty for not buying, and close.

Menning and Wilkinson<sup>6</sup> advocate the formula--Attention, Interest, Conviction, and Action--but they also say that it does not change the basic job of writing the letter to call it Attention, Interest, Desire, Conviction, and Action. This AICA formula is also advocated by Williams

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<sup>4</sup>Henry Hoke, Direct Mail Advertising Training Program (unpublished Section II, 1949), pp. 16-18.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Collier, The Robert Collier Letter Book (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), pp. 1-458.

<sup>6</sup>J. H. Menning and C. W. Wilkinson, Writing Business Letters (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1955), p. 215.

and Ball<sup>7</sup> and by Drach.<sup>8</sup> A change to Picture, Promise, Prove, and Push still does not change the basic formula. Williams and Ball recognize that, regardless of what the formula is called, the parts or elements cannot be separated but must be blended for unity and coherence.

Frailey and Schnell use the old Chain, Star, and Hook formula of Dr. Frank W. Eignan in developing the sales letter in Practical Business Writing. They explain that:

The Star attracts favorable attention and interest of the reader-- gets in step with him.

The Chain talks the situation through with the reader, holds his receptive interest while building the indispensable bridge between interest and action.

The Hook couples the last link in the chain to the action the writer wants the reader to take.<sup>9</sup>

In his Handbook, Frailey recognizes "that anything so abstract and intangible cannot be reduced to an exact science."<sup>10</sup> He does, however, offer what he calls "road-marks that may point in the right direction: They are:

1. Try to begin with the concept of talking, not writing. Hold fast to this feeling of a man-to-man contact to the very end.

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<sup>7</sup>Cecil B. Williams and John Ball, Effective Business Writing (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 267.

<sup>8</sup>Harvey E. Drach, American Business Writing (New York: American Book Co., 1959), pp. 146-206.

<sup>9</sup>L. E. Frailey and Edith Schnell, Practical Business Writing (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 27.

<sup>10</sup>L. E. Frailey, Handook of Business Letters (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), p. 554.

2. Use the language which is yours in every-day speech. Do not "press" or try to be clever. Relax. Be yourself.
3. Avoid the stilted expressions which make business writing stiff and colorless. Use, when you can, the home-spun words like folks, home, and the others which have pleasant meaning to the common man.
4. Reflect good manners rather than the "dignity" of business. There is no more dignity in business than in any other ordinary form of human activity.
5. Let the reader know he is being approached as a fellow human being. Call him by name a time or two. Add an "unnecessary" line about him, his city, a previous contact, or anything that may be of mutual interest.
6. Put the emphasis on him. Start sentences with you; avoid we. Interpret everything you talk about in terms of benefit to your reader--keep yourself and your company in the background as much as possible.
7. Keep in mind above all else that you must please your reader. See through his eyes, not yours.
8. Cultivate a sense of humor, but do not force it. If you have to stop and think about something funny to say, by all means don't say it. But don't be afraid to unbend. A smile is a million times more inviting than a frown.
9. Try hard to make the tone of your letter fit the personality of your reader.
10. Never dictate when you are cross or irritable. To be friendly you must feel friendly.<sup>11</sup>

Although the terms are different, a striking similarity exists between the above ten points and the "commandments" of Reibel and Roberts.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 554-555.

<sup>12</sup>John P. Reibel and Donald R. Roberts, Ten Commandments for Writing Letters That Get Results (New London, Connecticut: Printer's Ink Books, 1957), pp. 1-144.



They are:

- Be Clear
- Be Complete
- Be Correct
- Be Concise
- Be Considerate
- Be Cheerful
- Be Convincing
- Be Conversational
- Be Clever

Maybury<sup>13</sup> suggests a three-step formula for sales letters--attract attention, create desire, and induce action. McClosky<sup>14</sup> presents a four-step formula--favorable attention, desire, conviction, action. Henry Hoke says to "Picture, Promise, Prove, Push, and P. S."<sup>15</sup>

The Dartnell Short Course in Business Correspondence<sup>16</sup> presents the Attention--Interest--Conviction--Action, and the Star--Chain--Hook formulas plus a list of "Twelve General Rules for Writing Successful Sales Letters."

They are:

1. Understatement is often very much more effective than exaggeration or high-pressure copy. Wild claims and glittering generalities sink more sales letters than perhaps any other faults.

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<sup>13</sup>Sally B. Maybury, Principles of Business Letter Writing (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1959), pp. 252-259.

<sup>14</sup>John C. McCloskey, Handbook of Business Correspondence (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 211.

<sup>15</sup>Henry Hoke, "Some Plain Thinking About Direct Mail," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, IXX (June, 1956), p. 22.

<sup>16</sup>Leslie C. Lewis, Business Correspondence (The Dartnell Corp., 1949), Section 5, pp. 43-79.

2. Beware of starting your letters with funny stories or jokes unless these have very striking tie-in with your sales message.
3. Be careful of stunt letters and tricky enclosures. The prospect may be so impressed with all the cleverness of the idea that he overlooks the sales message.
4. If you include a special offer, make it stand out. This can be done by using all capital letters, indenting the paragraph, or using a contrasting color, like red, for the offer.
5. Avoid phony personalization; it defeats its purpose. A frankly mimeographed, multigraphed, or processed letter is better than one with a poorly matched fill-in.
6. Don't let your desire to sell dominate the letter. You have a better chance to interest the reader in your proposal than in your wish to make a sale.
7. Relating actual experiences to the commodity means more than the mere making of claims. Therefore, cite actual instances or testimonials when you can.
8. Applications to the reader's business or interests will impress him more than general agreements.
9. Make your descriptions accurate, specific, and easy to remember.
10. Try to anticipate and overcome probable objections or other obstacles. You may not get another chance to do so.
11. Regardless of what formula you may use, be sure that your letter begins interestingly, is believable and convincing throughout, and makes action easy.
12. Finally, remember that the best rules are frequently subject to exception when human nature is involved. Experiment and testing will help you to produce sales letters that are best for your particular proposition.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

Although Schute and Steinberg<sup>18</sup> do not offer a formula for sales letters, they did make the point that they were opposed to the use of the unusual in letter openings. They feel that getting the readers' interest means mentioning something in which the reader is already interested.

Stone does not list sales letter formulas in either his 1947 book<sup>19</sup> or his 1955 book.<sup>20</sup> His examples, however, illustrate that he uses or accepts most of the principles of Star--Chain--Hook, AIDA, etc. In the opinion of the researcher, the one outstanding characteristic illustrated in the examples of Robert Stone is that he apparently has accepted and implemented the various successful ideas and has added an unusual feeling of sincerity to what he writes. One of Stone's most emphatic instructions is to use "10 cent" words.

All the elements of the short formulas were incorporated into an article by McElroy. They were:

1. Hold his interest.
2. Show an advantage and prove it.
3. Persuade him to grasp it.
4. Ask him to do something and make it easy for him to do it.<sup>21</sup>

Orville Reed offered some amusing but valuable advice in what he called the "three times over technique:"

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<sup>18</sup>William M. Schute and Ervin P. Steinberg, Communications in Business and Industry (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1960), pp. 302-303.

<sup>19</sup>Robert Stone, Profitable Direct Mail Methods (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1947), pp. 1-452.

<sup>20</sup>Robert Stone, Successful Direct Mail Advertising and Selling (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), pp. 1-300.

<sup>21</sup>Tom McElroy, "Short Course in Letter Writing," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXII (July, 1959), p. 41.

1. Think it over, write it out, toss it out.
2. Think again, write it again, toss it out again.
3. Think it out, write it out, send it out.<sup>22</sup>

One well-known professional writer of direct mail copy had condemned the use of formulas of any kind. Mort Weiner says the use of formulas causes "virulent checklistitis." The three evils of formulas are, he says:

1. They are little help to the professional, but tend to turn amateurs into "experts."
2. They tend to substitute mechanical techniques for substance. Almost by definition they oversimplify.
3. They make no allowances for such vital intangibles as brilliant timing, a flash of insight, or an unexpected departure from the routine--the stuff of which outstanding direct mail is made.<sup>23</sup>

### Style in Sales Letters

In the textbooks reviewed were such letter styles as indented, block, simplified pure block, standard line, and NOMA. Maybury illustrated an "executive" style.<sup>24</sup> Frailey and Schnell, in addition to the common styles, illustrated the use of hanging indentation.<sup>25</sup> In their "Hall of Fame," Reibel and Roberts<sup>26</sup> illustrated several unusual letter styles but made no

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<sup>22</sup>Orville Reed, "Reedable Copy," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXIII (August, 1950), p. 26.

<sup>23</sup>Mort Weiner, "How To Create Good Direct Mail in 0 Steps," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXIII (May, 1960), pp. 23-24.

<sup>24</sup>Mayberry, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>25</sup>Frailey and Schnell, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>26</sup>Reibel and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 145-175.

attempt to apply titles to them. They devoted an entire chapter to what they call "Salutopenings" and "Complendings,"<sup>27</sup> a style introduced by Reibel to an ABWA convention in 1954.<sup>28</sup>

Stone illustrates nine different formats (styles) of sales letters.<sup>29</sup> Clarke, though not directly referring to particular styles, limits the number of usable ones by insisting that every letter include a salutation, opening and body development, and complimentary close.<sup>30</sup>

Hanging indentation was given as a favorite style of Irving Mack, famous writer of successful direct mail copy.<sup>31</sup> McElroy<sup>32</sup> says every letter should contain some "eye-hooks," but that they should not all be used in one letter. They are: a headline, a second color, a post script, occasional underscoring, a word or sentence in capital letters now and then, indentation, hand-written words in the margins, or check marks or dashes or circles around words.

One textbook says that among other essentials of a good letter the salutation and complimentary close "must be included in every letter."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 177-182.

<sup>28</sup> John P. Reibel, "Salutopenings and Complendings," The ABWA Bulletin, XIX (October, 1954), p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Stone, Successful Direct Mail Advertising and Selling, op. cit., pp. 119-130.

<sup>30</sup> George Timothy Clarke, Copywriting: Theory and Practice (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 340.

<sup>31</sup> John P. Reibel, How To Write Successful Business Letters in Fifteen Days (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1953), p. 273.

<sup>32</sup> McElroy, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> Hagar, et al, op. cit., p. 44.

Paul Bringe,<sup>34</sup> however, says that the sales letter should not begin "Gentlemen, Dear Sir, Dear Friend, etc." He advocates the use of something eye-catching or startling in a false heading or headline. Another writer says, "Don't start every letter 'Dear' somebody or other. Headlines have proved their value in letters with regular copy paragraphs following."<sup>35</sup>

Howard Dana Shaw once gave seven possible beginnings for a sales letter. They are:

1. Show how your product will do something the reader wants done-- how it is the solution to a problem he has.
2. Say immediately what you want him to do and what he gets if he does.
3. Word the first sentence so that it seems to be addressed specifically to the one reader or to his select group, your selected mailing list.
4. Make the reader feel important by asking his advice or asking a favor, or by belittling yourself.
5. Give the reader a piece of news in which he'll be interested.
6. Startle the reader with the unexpected--a surprising fact or an unexpected angle or approach to an idea.
7. Use a story beginning to illustrate the big point of your letter.<sup>36</sup>

### Length of Sales Letters

Considerable disagreement exists concerning the ideal length for a sales letter. While some writers are convinced that the one-page letter

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<sup>34</sup>Paul Bringe, "Upgrading Letter Copy," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXIII (December, 1960), pp. 30-31.

<sup>35</sup>Jud Jaffe, "Do's and Don't's for Direct Mail Advertising," Printer's Ink, CCLIII (October, 1955), p. 313.

<sup>36</sup>Howard Dana Shaw, "How To Start To Write a Letter," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XI (February, 1949), pp. 14-16.

is always best. Others are just as sure that one page may not always be best, or that there is any maximum length at all.

"A one-page sales letter is considered more effective than a two-page letter. This makes sense, for most customers read the first paragraph and then toss the letter into the wastebasket," says Hagar, Stewart, and Hutchinson.<sup>37</sup>

The Kemper Insurance Company says, "The shorter letter not only costs less, but will do a better job. A concise message is easy to understand, and easy to read. It will get better and faster results."<sup>38</sup>

Reed says, "It is true that some copy is too long and will not be read. But some ads, particularly when exclusive features have to be explained, require lengthy copy."<sup>39</sup>

Dunn says, "Some good direct mail copy is long, some very short. In general, direct-mail copy tends to be longer than the mass-circulation media, since the route from reward to action may be so circuitous that a lot of explanation is needed."<sup>40</sup> He also says, "There are certain cases where long copy is especially desirable:

1. Where the product is new or unknown.
2. Where the product or idea is a complicated one.

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<sup>37</sup>Hagar, et al, op. cit., pp. 146-147.

<sup>38</sup>"Kemper Better Letter Clinic," The ABWA Bulletin, XIII (April, 1954), p. 17.

<sup>39</sup>Orville Reed, "Reedable Copy," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, xxIII (January, 1961), p. 43.

<sup>40</sup>S. Watson Dunn, Advertising Copy and Communications (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1956), p. 402.

3. Where illustrations of the product are poorly reproduced.
4. Where dramatic or reasons-why copy is used.<sup>41</sup>

Menning and Wilkinson<sup>42</sup> say lots of effective sales letters are long. Woolf says, "Don't bother to count the words; whether they are ten or a hundred doesn't matter--if they are adequate."<sup>43</sup>

A list of general rules for length, according to Howard Dana Shaw, is that "a long (or longer) letter is called for,

1. If your product or service is something for which a demand does not already exist.
2. If your offer or product is hard to explain.
3. If the price is high.
4. If the matter must be considered or taken up with others.
5. If your reader or class of readers is resistant.
6. If your reader has more time to read.
7. If your reader has indicated his interest.
8. If the product bears directly on your reader's success or happiness.
9. If you need to be selective.<sup>44</sup>

One writer says, "Tell the story you need to tell and don't worry about the length of your letter or mailing piece."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 278-279.

<sup>42</sup>Menning and Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 220.

<sup>43</sup>James D. Woolf, "Long Copy? Short Copy?" Advertising Age, XXII (October, 1951), p. 100.

<sup>44</sup>Howard Dana Shaw, "Stop Worrying About Length," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XI (December, 1948), pp. 8-10.

<sup>45</sup>Elon G. Barton, "How Long Should Your Letter Be?" Advertising Age, X (January 6, 1958), p. 48.



Bringe has been quoted as saying,

If it were customary to use letterheads 16 x 24 instead of 8½ x 11, the letters we call long might be short. If our typewriters gave us 20 lines to the page instead of 66, the letters we call short might be long. Too long is not long enough if it does not tell the whole story, and too short can be long enough if it produces action. Is the letter interesting? If it is, it can be 40 pages and we will wish it to be 80. How wet is water? depends on whether we are drinking it or drowning in it.<sup>46</sup>

Collier says,

Tell your story, no matter how long or short it may be, striving simply to keep it interesting. The only safe measure you can apply is the one Lincoln gave when someone asked how long a man's legs should be: Long enough to reach the ground.<sup>47</sup>

Reibel and Roberts say the letter is like a woman's skirt in that "it should be long enough to cover the subject but short enough to be interesting."<sup>48</sup>

Lewis summarized that,

The correct length of letters is a relative matter. If the message is not complete enough to give the reader a clear conception of your idea, it is too short--regardless of length. If it contains more words than are necessary to tell him what he wants to know, it is too long--regardless of length.<sup>49</sup>

### Mailing Dates

Lewis says,

Certainly a sales letter received with a stack of orders, invoices, and bills on a busy Monday morning is less likely to be given attention

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<sup>46</sup>"Short Notes Department," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXIII (February, 1961), 34-35.

<sup>47</sup>Collier, op. cit., p. 427.

<sup>48</sup>Riebel and Roberts, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>49</sup>Leslie Llewallen Lewis, Business Correspondence (Chicago: The Dartnell Corporation, 1949), Section 3, p. 13.

than one which has been mailed to arrive on Tuesday afternoon, when mail is usually lightest.<sup>50</sup>

Graham says that Monday has too much competition and that on Fridays the prospects may be thinking of the week-end. He says, "Schedule mailings so as to avoid delivery on Monday, Friday, or previous to holidays."<sup>51</sup>

Stone, too, says, "Your mail will naturally get more attention if it is received on Tuesday rather than Monday."<sup>52</sup> Egner agrees on the Tuesday arrival date. He says, "If possible have your mailings arranged so that they will reach as many of your prospects as possible on Tuesday."<sup>53</sup>

C. E. Hershewey, Editorial Director, National Research Bureau, says,

Tuesday has proved to be the best day for the arrival of mail. The reason for this is that Tuesday's mail is the lightest of any day in the week. Therefore, your mail will naturally get better attention and readership.<sup>54</sup>

According to Fortune, "mail arriving at mid-week stands the best chance of avoiding the wastebasket."<sup>55</sup> Despite all the opinions to the contrary, Mr. Hoke says, "Holidays and other 'bugaboos' are meaningless."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Irving Graham, How To Sell Through Mail Order (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1949), p. 288.

<sup>52</sup> Stone, Profitable Direct Mail Methods, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>53</sup> Frank Egner, How To Make Sales Letters Make Money (New York: Harper Bros., 1937), p. 142.

<sup>54</sup> In a letter to the researcher, dated September 22, 1960.

<sup>55</sup> "The Postman Rings for Sales," Fortune (February, 1953), p. 137.

<sup>56</sup> Loc. cit.

The month of the year that yields the best results, too, is a point of contention among the writers in the field. Egner<sup>57</sup> says that the best months for direct mail (in order) are January, February, and then March. Graham says October is the best month, "resulting in the most favorable response."<sup>58</sup> In 1947, Stone listed the three best months, in order--January, March, and February.<sup>59</sup> In 1955, he listed the three best months, in order, as January, February, and September.<sup>60</sup>

Bringe reported success with direct mail in all months. He said, "Another rule we do not follow is the direct mail calendar," and that, "December mailings pulled just as heavily as at any other time."<sup>61</sup> Another user said, "July through February are the best months."<sup>62</sup> And yet another said, "Many automotive services and products have a seasonal aspect."<sup>63</sup>

### Color in Sales Letters

About color, one writer said, "Given a pile of letters on a desk, the one on colored stock immediately stands out. It calls itself to the

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<sup>57</sup> Egner, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>58</sup> Graham, op. cit., p. 279.

<sup>59</sup> Stone, Profitable Direct Mail Methods, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>60</sup> Stone, Successful Direct Mail Advertising and Selling, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>61</sup> "Direct Mail Replaces 128 Salesmen; Sales Went Up 400%, DMAA Told," Advertising Age, XXII (October 22, 1951), p. 10.

<sup>62</sup> "This Postman Rings for Sales," loc. cit.

<sup>63</sup> A. M. Anderson, "How To Use Direct Mail in Helping Dealers," Mediascope, III (April, 1959), p. 46.

prospects' attention, even though the full sheet isn't visible."<sup>64</sup>

Another said,

Thousands of letters are competing with yours for attention--all dressed in white. Seems simple, too. And it is! Dress your envelopes and letterhead in blue, or green, or canary, or golden-rod. One hundred to one you'll get better results.<sup>65</sup>

Jaffe says,

Don't use only one kind and/or color paper in a mailing that includes several pieces. You can add variety, interest, emphasis, color by using something different for the return card, extra folder, special offer, or whatever else may be included.<sup>66</sup>

Mayer says,

The great majority of the tests show white paper is not the best color for letterheads, envelopes, or order blanks. Usually they show that one of the warm colors, such as pink or cherry, outpulls the colder colors such as green and blue.<sup>67</sup>

Yet Birren says,

The masses of the population will tend to cling to certain primary favorites--the same hues (or variations of them) which the psychologist has found individual to human heart's desire--red, green, blue, yellow.<sup>68</sup>

Stone, like Mayer, says that the warm colors are yellow, orange, and red, and that the cool colors are blue, green, and violet.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Joseph G. Kolvel, "How Important is Good Letterhead Design?" The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, IX (April, 1956), p. 36.

<sup>65</sup> Ralph T. Curtis, "Put More Selling Power into Your Direct Mail," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXI (May, 1958), p. 41.

<sup>66</sup> Jaffe, loc. cit.

<sup>67</sup> Edward N. Mayer, Jr., How To Make More Money With Your Direct Mail (New York: Printers Ink Books, 1953), pp. 273-274.

<sup>68</sup> Faber Birren, Selling Color to People (New York: University Books, 1956), p. 30.

<sup>69</sup> Stone, Successful Direct Mail Advertising and Selling, op. cit., p. 118.

One writer has said,

It is generally found that the most difficult thing to accomplish is to get people to read beyond the first paragraph. Your prospect is most likely to finish reading your letter if the colors are harmonized with each other, and with the color of paper. The secret of color power is in the optical and psychological correctness for a specific message.<sup>70</sup>

Koelvel says, "Stick to the pastel shades; avoid the brilliant tones. Why? Too much distraction and too much clash with some inks."<sup>71</sup>

Lewis suggests that the answers have not yet been found in the quest for the best colors. He quoted the results of one company's experiments showing seven per cent returns from white letterhead and eight per cent from colored. "While these facts are by no means conclusive," he said, "they suggest the value of experimentation with inks and paper in various color combinations."<sup>72</sup>

Despite the doubt in some minds, some are sure they have the answer. For example Gaw, of the Direct Mail Research Institute, says, "The best color is pink."<sup>73</sup> J. H. Blandford and Associates of Quebec, Canada, reported that a pink letterhead was 80 per cent better than white in their tests. For them green was second, buff was third, and blue was fourth.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Lewis Cheskin, Color Guide for Marketing Media (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1954), p. 60.

<sup>71</sup>Koelvel, loc. cit.

<sup>72</sup>Lewis, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>73</sup>The Postman Rings for Sales," loc. cit.

<sup>74</sup>"Short Notes Department," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXIII (March, 1961), p. 9.

Return Order Solicitation Methods

No opposition was found to the inclusion of some method of solicitation of return orders in every sales letter. Mayer said, "You can and should include an order form, a reply card, and/or a reply envelope."<sup>75</sup> Schute and Steinberg did not mention envelopes but said, "It is often profitable to include a business reply card."<sup>76</sup>

Hoke said, "Reply cards usually pull better than envelopes because cards usually ask for inquiries and envelopes for money."<sup>77</sup> He did not, however, give any indication of the relative success of the two when both were asking for orders.

Maybury says, "Almost invariably, today, the sales letter encloses a business reply envelope or card bearing the seller's address to make it easy for the reader to act."<sup>78</sup> In a magazine article Hoke said, "Return envelopes will not usually increase returns if you are asking for the expenditure of money."<sup>79</sup>

One user reported that the inclusion of an order card, where one had not been used before, was highly successful. The cost of the cards was only \$28, and the returns amounted to \$1308 in sales.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Mayer, op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>76</sup> Schute and Steinberg, op. cit., p. 340.

<sup>77</sup> Henry Hoke, Direct Mail Advertising Training Program (1949), p. 27.

<sup>78</sup> Maybury, op. cit., p. 258.

<sup>79</sup> Henry Hoke, "How To Think About Direct Mail (Garden City, New York: The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, 1951), p. 46.

<sup>80</sup> Philip Brady, "When We Added a Reply Card . . . We Got \$1308 Back," Printer's Ink, Vol. 243 (April, 1953), pp. 70-73.

One author listed a set of rules to follow in deciding whether post cards or return envelopes should be used. He said to use envelopes in the following cases:

1. When a large unit of sale commodity is being sold.
2. When more than one form is being returned.
3. When personal items are being sold.
4. When money is to be returned.
5. When selling raw material.
6. When coupons are to be returned.
7. When reader is asked to approve the letter and return it.

He suggested the use of post cards in these instances:

1. When a low unit of sale commodity is being sold.
2. When permission is being sought to send samples.
3. When prospects fill long-hour jobs and have little time.
4. When the mark-up on the product is low.
5. When free gifts are to be sent and the sale appeal is to be made later.<sup>81</sup>

### Expected Returns

The minimum percentage of returns that can be expected or that are necessary to make a mailing successful cannot be pre-determined. Henry Hoke lists successful mailings that have produced as low as .86 per cent and as high as 22 per cent returns.<sup>82</sup> Another writer says,

What percentage (returns) do you need? Never mind about set rules; there are none. Some firms need one-half one one per cent, others

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<sup>81</sup> John R. Crippen, Successful Direct Mail Methods (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., Inc., 1936), pp. 115-117.

<sup>82</sup> Henry Hoke, Direct Mail Advertising Program, (1949) (unpublished) Section 27, pp. 10-11.

need 2, 7, 40, or even 80 per cent in order to profit. Measure the cost of getting your orders or inquiries against sales dollar volume and make your own standards.<sup>83</sup>

Reed sums up the futility of anticipating returns by citing questions from a letter he received. The writer of the letter said, "We are thinking about getting into direct mail. How should we go about it? What returns should we expect?" Reed says, "These are not new, of course, but epitomize the ignorance of the ignorant."<sup>84</sup>

A low percentage of returns can have statistical significance. James Connell, in an article on statistical treatment, discusses treatment of two and one-half per cent returns.<sup>85</sup> Again in the same series on statistics of direct mail, he discusses statistical treatment of returns "when working on a 1% return basis."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Janet Gibbs, "Testing for Sales," Sales Management, XXC (January 3, 1958), pp. 72-73.

<sup>84</sup> Orville Reed, "Reedable Copy," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXIII (October, 1960), p. 74.

<sup>85</sup> James Connell, "An Arithmetic for Direct Mail," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXII (April, 1960), p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> James Connell, "An Arithmetic for Direct Mail," The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, XXIII (May, 1960), p. 31.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURE

The study was conducted in six steps. Although steps were not performed in exact order, and work was being done on one while others were in progress, they can be broken down as follows:

1. Writing the letter
2. Preparation of the mailing
3. Selection of recipients
4. Mailing
5. Recording of data
6. Statistical treatment of the data

#### The Letter

The letter used in this study was written by the investigator. An effort was made to incorporate, as nearly as possible, the suggestions of various authors for writing successful sales letters. Copies of the letter appear in the Appendix.

Since all formulas seemed to have at least four elements in common--getting of attention, holding interest, creating desire, and prompting action--these elements were given special attention.

The false heading, "He didn't say 'gosh' then forget it . . ." was used to gain attention. Through the introduction of Mr. Sumter and the narration of his experience it was hoped that interest would be held. The advantages of the product (hickory-tough, easy to sell, easy to use, etc.)

were interspersed throughout the letter and the salability reiterated again near the end in an attempt to create desire. The question, "Won't you check your first gross order . . . ?" and the return post card or envelope were attempts to stimulate action.

In an attempt to obtain some evaluation of the quality of the letter, a copy was sent to ten leading teachers, authors, and professional writers of business letters. The ten were selected on the basis of offices held in national associations, books published, articles published, and frequent occurrence of their names in publications. They were told that their evaluation of the letter would not be identified in the study. The names and titles of the ten people selected to evaluate the letter are listed in the Appendix.

Seven of the ten contacted people replied. Six of the seven made an evaluation. One prominent teacher replied that he was unable to evaluate the letter without such information as "when would the letter be mailed, who would get it, whether it was part of a campaign, what the recipient was supposed to do (sic), etc."

One well known leader in the field of direct mail said, "I would like to congratulate you upon your letter. It is an excellent piece of copy." About style he said, "As I am sure you know, one of the most difficult types of copy to prepare is the narrative style. Narrative style copy must really hold the reader's attention to be successful. I think you have succeeded in this instance." He was, however, concerned about the lack of guarantee in the offer and expressed skepticism concerning the prospects' willingness to order in gross lots "sight unseen."

Another quite well known direct mail expert said, "I think your letter is just fine. Great sense of humor. Good use of narrative." He offered no adverse criticism.

A prominent textbook author said, "The copy is good. It has verve. Gradewise it must be either A or F; I'm for A." He, too, doubted the ability of the letter to prompt gross orders without the prospect having tried the product.

Another textbook author said, "The letter has a sprightly style and good interest value. It is especially good in its you-viewpoint adaptation of the product's benefits." He also commented on the interesting anecdote beginning, but felt that the letter was slow to move the product.

The severest critic of the letter, a well known textbook writer and teacher, suggested that the entire first page be "boiled down" to five lines, and that the second paragraph on page two, "Every man in your territory . . ." be used as the first paragraph in the letter. The first paragraph on page two, according to this critic, should have been the second paragraph in the letter. If his suggestions had been followed, the entire letter would have been less than three-fourths of one page, and the narrative copy style would have been discarded. The only favorable comment made in the evaluation was that the close was "pretty good."

It was interesting to note that the close was called "weak" by still another famous writer. He indicated that the letter indicated talent on the part of the writer; but he, too, objected to the length of the letter and expressed doubt concerning prospects buying in gross lots without having first tried the product.

Although the letter received some adverse criticism, mostly from two of those asked to evaluate it, it was decided that on the basis of the comments of the two direct mail experts the letter was usable. The actual quality of the letter was not directly being tested, and regardless of its quality it was hoped that the text of the letter would be equally effective in all cases and different reactions would result only from the use of different colors, styles, and return order solicitation methods.

The letter was printed with three style variations. The first was a plain block letter with a false heading and no complimentary close. In the second letter the same wording was used, but a hanging indentation style was utilized. The third style included a marginal message. This style was suggested by Miss Elise Davis, Professor of Office Administration in the College of Business Administration at the University of Tennessee.

In Appendix A is a complete letter in marginal message style on pink letterhead, one in hanging indentation style on yellow letterhead, one in block style on blue letterhead, and a copy of the first pages of two block style letters--one on green and one on white letterhead.

Each letter contained a multilithed price sheet and return post card or return envelope, and a multigraphed catalog sheet. Copies of all these forms are in Appendix A.

#### Preparation of the Mailing

To provide for accurate recording of information concerning the combination of style, letterhead color, and return order solicitation method contained in each letter a coding system was devised. The code

numbers assigned each combination, with a description of the elements of each combination is shown in Table I. The number of letters mailed each code number classification is shown in Table II.

The first six code numbers were all on white letterhead. Combinations one and two were block style, three and four contained a marginal message, and five and six had hanging indentations. All the odd-numbered combinations contained return post cards, and the even numbered ones contained return envelopes.

The same coding system was used throughout the thirty combinations-- 7 through 12 were on pink letterhead, 13 through 18 were on yellow, 19 through 24 on blue, and 25 through 30 on green.

### Selection of Recipients

The mailing list selected for the study was contained in Jobber Topics Annual Directory and Buyers Guide, an annual publication of the Irving Cloud Corporation.<sup>1</sup> Previous experience with a purchased list had led to the conclusion that if it was representative of all purchased lists, they included the names of far too many out-of-business and non-existent firms, and that many listed firms were too small to be prospects.

Other possible methods of compiling a list, such as directories, advertisements, etc., were discarded because of the time and expense involved. The list used was chosen because it was timely, because it was inexpensive, and because it contained the names of only larger firms-- members of the Automotive Warehouse Dealers Association.

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<sup>1</sup>Jobber Topics Annual Directory and Buyers Guide (Chicago: Irving Cloud Publications, 1959), pp. 30-96D.

TABLE I  
 CODE NUMBERS ASSIGNED THIRTY COMBINATIONS OF STYLE, COLOR,  
 AND RETURN ORDER SOLICITATION METHODS IN 1800 SALES LETTERS

Colors	Block		Marginal Message		Hanging Indentation	
	Post Card	Return Envelope	Post Card	Return Envelope	Post Card	Return Envelope
White	1 <sup>a</sup>	2	3	4	5	6
Yellow	7	8	9	10	11	12
Pink	13	14	15	16	17	18
Blue	19	20	21	22	23	24
Green	25	26	27	28	29	30

<sup>a</sup>Code number 1 represents a letter in block style, on white letterhead, with a post card enclosed. The elements of each code number combination may be determined by reading letterhead color at the left margin and style and return order solicitation method from the column heading.

TABLE II  
NUMBER OF LETTERS MAILED IN EACH OF 30 CODE NUMBER CLASSIFICATIONS

Color	Block		Marginal Message		Hanging Indentation	
	Post Card	Return Envelope	Post Card	Return Envelope	Post Card	Return Envelope
White	60 <sup>a</sup>	60	60	60	60	60
Yellow	60	60	60	60	60	60
Pink	60	60	60	60	60	60
Blue	60	60	60	60	60	60
Green	60	60	60	60	60	60

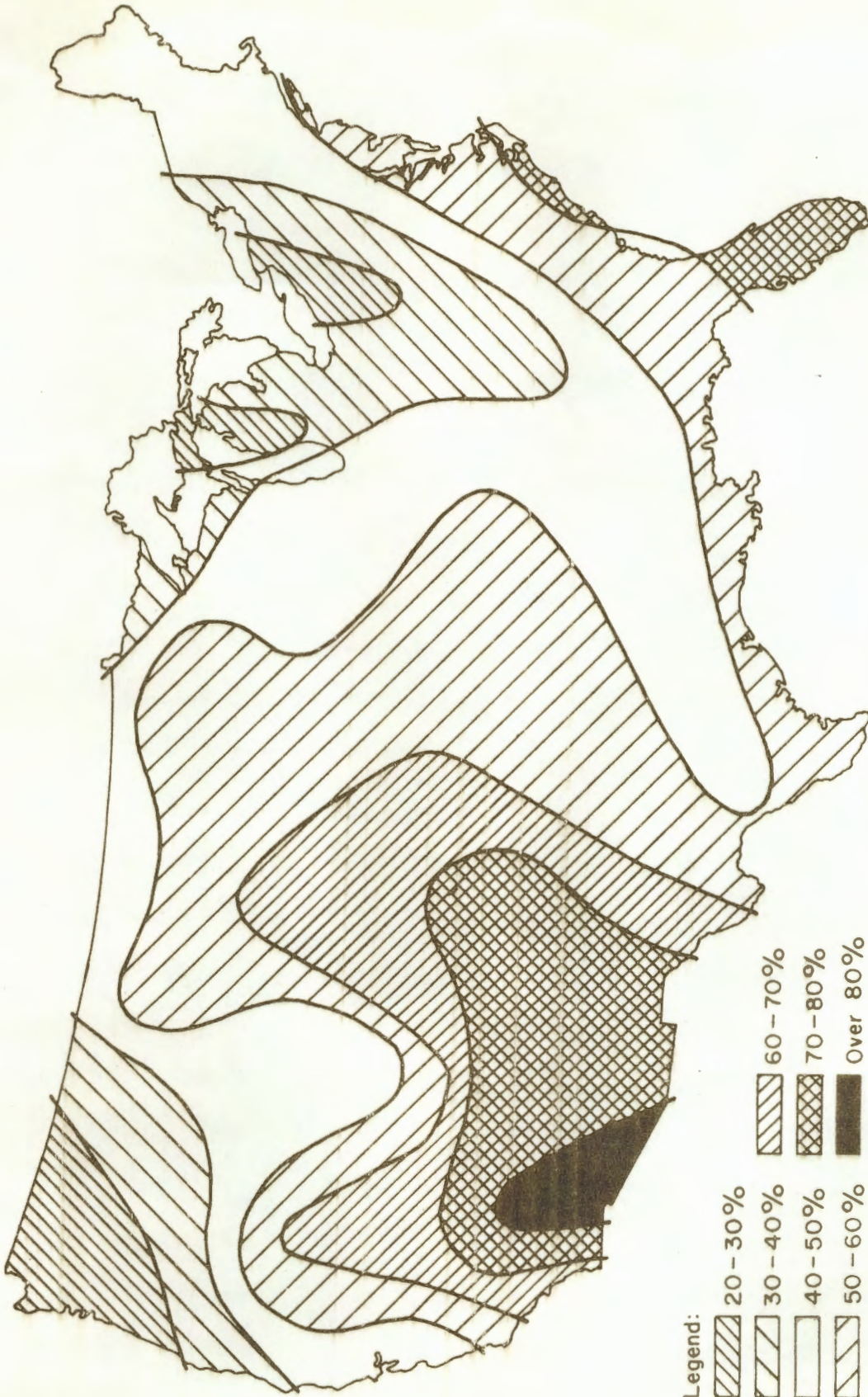
<sup>a</sup>Represents a letter in block style, on white letterhead, with a postcard enclosed. The elements of each code number combination may be determined by reading letterhead color at the left margin and style and return order solicitation method from the column heading.

The mailing list contained the names of 3321 firms. All those who had been previously contacted by Liberty Tire & Battery Supply or Machine Products Company were deleted from the list. All those who were or ever had been customers were also deleted. The remaining list contained 2723 names. These names were numbered consecutively as they appeared on the list, alphabetically arranged within each state and the states arranged in alphabetical order.

To determine which of the 2723 companies were to receive the 1800 letters, a table of random numbers was used. As a number was taken from the table of random numbers, the firm with that assigned number was assigned a second number, designating the letter combination it was to receive. The first sixty firms thus selected were coded "1," the second sixty were coded "2," etc., until the entire 1800 had been selected. Thus each number, 1 through 30, was assigned to sixty firms. Both the original consecutive number and the code number were printed on the list beside the firm name. To avoid confusion, the assigned consecutive number was printed in black and the code number in red. At this time also it was determined from a sunlight map whether the firm was located in an area of more than 50 per cent sunlight or less than 50 per cent sunlight. Those in areas of over 50 per cent sunlight were coded with a plus, and those in areas of less than 50 per cent sunlight were coded with a minus. A copy of the maps used is shown in Figure 1.

The name of the buyer, the name of the firm, and the address of the selected firms were typed on number 10 white envelopes. On the envelope was the Liberty Tire & Battery return address and "Form 3547 Requested."





Legend:

- 20-30%
- 30-40%
- 40-50%
- 50-60%
- 60-70%
- 70-80%
- Over 80%

Figure 1: Percentage of Hours of Daily Sunlight in Various Areas of the United States.

Source: Faber Birren, Selling Color to People (New York: University Books, Inc., 1956), p. 32.

A sample of the envelope is exhibited in Appendix A. When the addressing of the envelope had been completed, the code number assigned that company was lightly penciled into the upper right corner of the envelope.

After all envelopes had been addressed, they were sorted by code numbers and checked to ascertain that there were sixty of each of the thirty code numbers.

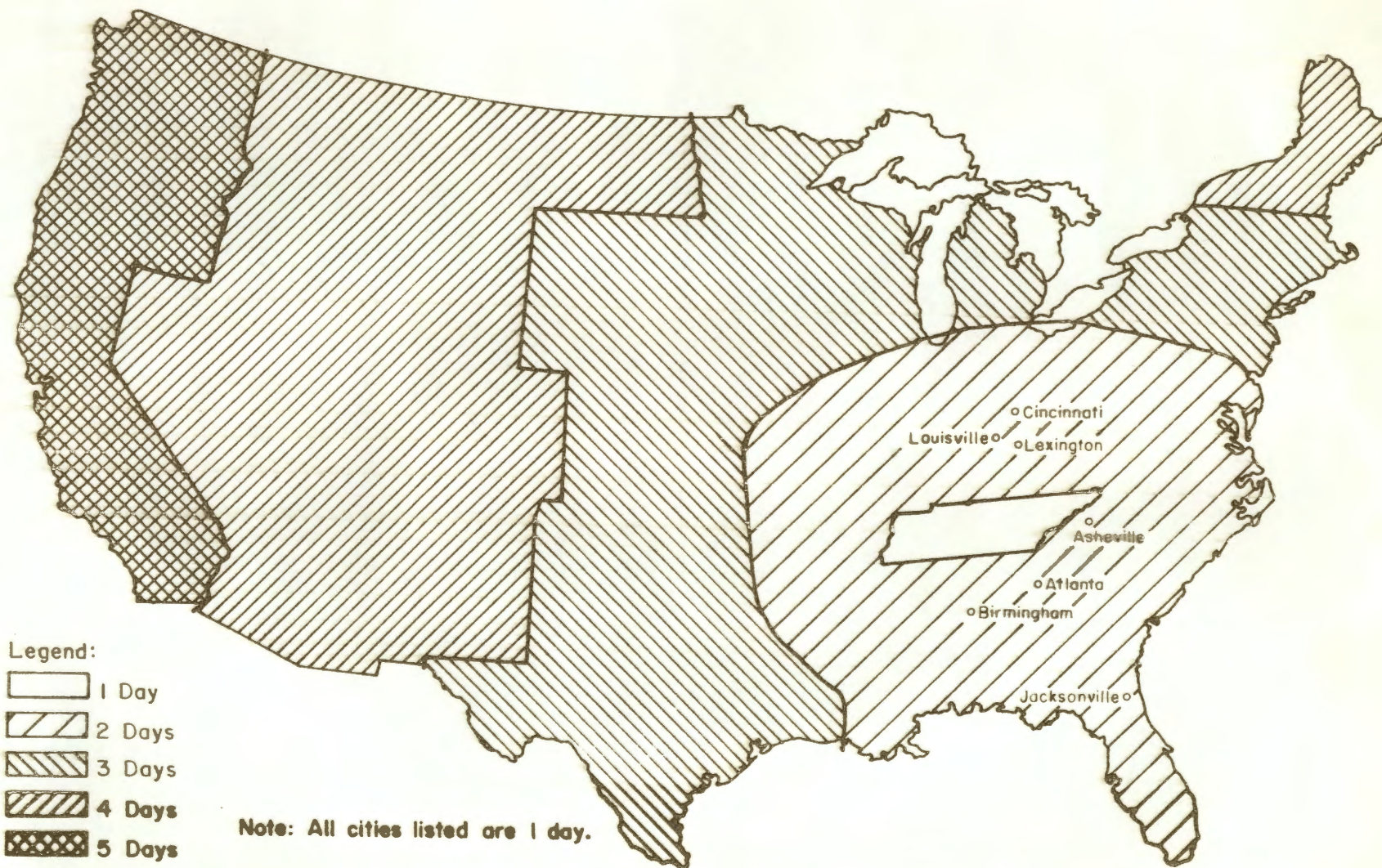
Correct combinations of letter style, letterhead color, and return post card or return envelope were sorted out--sixty of each combination. These were then stuffed into the correspondingly coded envelopes.

### Mailing

The letters were sorted by state to facilitate mailing that would control arrival date. In some cases it was necessary to further sort by particular cities within states because of proximity of those cities to Knoxville, Tennessee, and because of the difference in city and rural mail delivery times.

With the assistance of Mr. Thomas Farmer, Expediter of Mails at the United States Post Office in Knoxville, a map was drawn for use in computing correct mailing times that would enhance the possibility of all letters arriving at their destination on the same day. A reproduction of that map is shown in Figure 2.

After the letters were sorted and handled, they were mailed at the main Branch of the Knoxville Post Office. Each group of letters was mailed at the time computed to best enhance their arrival in the hands of the addressees on Tuesday, February 2, 1961.



**Figure 2. Time Required for Delivery of Mail from Knoxville, Tennessee to Various Parts of the United States.**

**Source:** Prepared with the assistance of Mr. Thomas Farmer, Expediter of Mails, U. S. Post Office, Knoxville, Tennessee.

### Recording the Data

When orders were received that resulted from the mailing, a three by five card was prepared. On it was listed the name and address of the ordering firm, the size of the order, and (secured from the original mailing list) the code number of the letter that had secured the order. At this time, also, a notation was made indicating whether the firm was located in an area of over 50 per cent sunlight or less than 50 per cent sunlight. The three by five cards were then filed for statistical treatment at the end of the period allowed for all returns--forty-five days plus postal time both ways for each letter.

### Statistical Treatment of the Data

A Chi-square test for independence of factors was originally planned in the statistical treatment of the data obtained. The total number of returns was too small, however, for Chi-square treatment. A row and column distribution of the frequencies of returns from various combinations rendered some cells with zero frequencies and others with frequencies below the minimum of five for Chi-square treatment.

To determine statistical significance of difference, if any, between the results obtained from three styles and the five colors, an analysis of variance (two variable classifications) was used. The returns were distributed by color in rows and by style in columns. Sum of the squares of both row and column means were determined. Both were then subjected to an F test--the sum of squares of each divided by the estimate of variance independent of the differences in means of both rows and columns.

A t test was used to determine the statistical significance, if any, between the results obtained by the use of post cards and by the use of return envelopes. The t test was appropriate because an equal number (900) of letters containing post cards and return envelopes were mailed.

A Z test for unequal proportions was used to test for significance of difference between the results obtained from the use of warm colors (yellow and pink) in areas having less than 50 per cent sunlight and in areas having more than 50 per cent sunlight. The same method was used to test for significance of difference between the results obtained from the use of cool colors (blue and green) in areas having more than 50 per cent sunlight and in areas having less than 50 per cent sunlight. The Z test for unequal proportions was appropriate in this case because an unequal number of letters of each color was mailed into each area of different sunlight percentages.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

From the 1800 sales letters mailed, 57 orders were received-- a return of 3.17 per cent. As indicated on pages 39 and 40, this was sufficient for statistical treatment. Only seven letters were returned because of incorrect or insufficient addresses, the addresses being out of business, and the letters being refused. Since no two of these were in any one code number classification, they were disregarded in the final treatment of data and all data were treated as if all letters had been received. A distribution of orders received, by code number classification of the letter eliciting the order, is shown in Table III. For example, in the first classification--a block style, on white paper, including a post card--two orders were received. The code number classification is indicated by a 1 in parenthesis.

#### Hypotheses 1 and 2

The first hypothesis advanced in the study was that "no statistically significant difference in sales will result from the use of different styles in sales letters." The second hypothesis was that "no statistically significant difference in sales will result from the use of different letterhead colors in sales letters." Both these hypotheses were tested concurrently in an analysis of variance design.

The computation of the values required for the analysis, taken from Table III, was as follows:

TABLE III

DISTRIBUTION OF ORDERS RECEIVED FROM 1800 SALES LETTERS BY STYLE,  
 COLOR, RETURN ORDER METHOD AND CODE NUMBER CLASSIFICATION<sup>a</sup>

Color	Block		Marginal Message		Hanging Indentation		Total
	Post Card	Return Envelope	Post Card	Return Envelope	Post Card	Return Envelope	
White	2 (1) <sup>b</sup>	1 (2)	3 (3)	2 (4)	2 (5)	1 (6)	11
Yellow	1 (7)	1 (8)	2 (9)	3 (10)	(11)	5 (12)	12
Pink	(13)	1 (14)	3 (15)	1 (16)	(17)	(18)	5
Blue	3 (19)	1 (20)	3 (21)	(22)	1 (23)	4 (24)	12
Green	2 (25)	1 (26)	5 (27)	3 (28)	1 (29)	4 (30)	17
Total	8	5	16	9	4	14	57

<sup>a</sup>Figures in parenthesis represent assigned code number for that combination.

<sup>b</sup>Sixty letters of each code number classification were mailed.

	Block	Marginal Message	Hanging Indentation	Total
White	3	5	3	11
Yellow	2	5	5	12
Pink	1	4		5
Blue	4	3	5	12
Green	3	8	6	17
Total	13	25	19	57

The sum of the square of the columns were computed by the following formula:

$$S_c = \frac{(T_{1c})^2}{N_{1c}} + \frac{(T_{2c})^2}{N_{2c}} + \frac{(T_{3c})^2}{N_{3c}} + \frac{(T_{..})^2}{N}$$

where

$S_c$  = sum of squares of columns

$T_c$  = total of columns ( $T_{1c}$ , column 1;  $T_{2c}$ , column 3; etc.)

$T_{..}$  = total of columns and rows

$N$  = number of cells

$N_c$  = number of cells in columns ( $N_{1c}$ , cells in column 1; etc.)

The value of  $S_c$  was found to be 14.4.

The sum of squares of rows were computed in the same manner:

$$S_r = \frac{(T_{1r})^2}{N_{1r}} + \frac{(T_{2r})^2}{N_{2r}} + \frac{(T_{3r})^2}{N_{3r}} + \frac{(T_{4r})^2}{N_{4r}} + \frac{(T_{5r})^2}{N_{5r}} + \frac{(T_{..})^2}{N}$$

where

$S_r$  = sum of squares of rows

$T_r$  = total of rows ( $T_{1r}$ , row 1;  $T_{2r}$ , row 2; etc.)

$T_{..}$  = total of columns and rows

$N$  = number of cells

$N_r$  = number of cells in row ( $N_{1r}$ , row 1;  $N_{2r}$ , row 2; etc.)

The value of  $S_r$  was found to be 20.39.



Total sum of squares was computed from the formula:

$$ST = (c_1)^2 + (c_2)^2 + (c_3)^2 \dots + (c_{15})^2 - \frac{(T..)^2}{N}$$

where

ST = total sum of squares

$c_1$  = cell number ( $c_1$ , cell 1;  $c_2$ , cell 2; etc.)

T.. = total of columns and rows

N = number of cells

The total of sum of squares was found to be 40.4.

The analysis of variance was:

	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>
Row mean	24.39	4	6.097
Column mean	14.40	2	7.200
Residual	17.61	8	2.200
Total	56.40	14	

An F ratio to test the difference among rows for significance was performed as follows:

$$F_r = \frac{\bar{X}_r}{\bar{R}}$$

where

$\bar{X}_r$  = row mean square

$\bar{R}$  = residual mean square

The value of  $F_r$  was found to be 2.77. From the F Table<sup>1</sup>,  $F_{.99}(4,8)$  is 7.01; thus at the one per cent level there was no significant difference in the results obtained from the use of different colors and hypothesis one was accepted.

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<sup>1</sup>Wilford J. Dixon and Frank J. Massey, Jr., Introduction to Statistical Methods (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1957), p. 394.

A test for significance among columns was performed in the same manner:

$$F_c = \frac{\bar{X}_c}{\bar{R}}$$

where

$$\bar{X}_c = \text{column mean square}$$

$$\bar{R} = \text{residual mean square}$$

$F_c$  was found to be 3.27. From the F Table,  $F_{.99}(2,8)$  is 8.65; thus at the one per cent level there was no significant difference in the results obtained from different styles and hypothesis two was accepted.

### Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis stated that "no statistically significant difference will result from the use of different return order forms in sales letters." As shown in Table III, a total of 900 letters containing post cards and 900 containing return envelopes were mailed. From the 900 containing post cards, 28 orders were received. From the 900 containing envelopes, 29 orders were received. A t test was used to test the hypothesis.

Standard deviation of the difference between proportions was determined as follows:

$$\sigma_{p_1 - p_2} = \sqrt{\frac{p_1(1-p_1)}{n_1} + \frac{p_2(1-p_2)}{n_2}}$$

where

$p_1$  = sample of proportion 1

$p_2$  = sample of proportion 2

$n_1$  = size of proportion 1

$n_2$  = size of proportion 2

The standard deviation was found to be 0.0083

The formula for  $t$  was:

$$t = \frac{P_1 - P_2}{\sigma_{P_1 - P_2}}$$

where

$P_1$  = size of proportion 1

$P_2$  = size of proportion 2

$\sigma$  = 0.0083

The result was 0.13, and  $t_{.99}$  from the Table<sup>2</sup> is 2.576. Thus at the one per cent level there was no statistically significant difference in the results obtained from the use of post cards and the use of return envelopes. Hypothesis three was accepted.

#### Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis stated that "no statistically significant differences in sales will result in different geographic areas from the use of different letterhead colors in those different areas." Of the 1440 letters on colored letterhead, 720 were on warm colors (yellow and pink) and 720 were on cool colors (blue and green). Of the 720 yellow and pink letters mailed, 254 went to areas having more than 50 per cent sunlight and produced 12 orders. Four hundred and sixty-six of the yellow and pink letters were mailed to areas having less than 50 per cent sunlight; they produced 5 orders.

Of the 720 letters on blue and green letterhead, 243 went to areas having more than 50 per cent sunlight, and produced 7 orders. The 477

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<sup>2</sup>Fredrick E. Croxton and Dudley J. Cowden, Applied General Statistics (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 751.

that went to areas having less than 50 per cent sunlight produced 22 orders.

The results from the warm and cool colors were tested separately by the following Z formula for different proportions:

$$\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 \pm z_{\frac{1}{2}\alpha} \sqrt{\frac{\bar{X}_1 (1-\bar{X}_1)}{N_1} + \frac{\bar{X}_2 (1-\bar{X}_2)}{N_2}} < p_1 - p_2 < \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2$$

$$\pm z_{\frac{1}{2}\alpha} \sqrt{\frac{\bar{X}_1 (1-\bar{X}_1)}{N_1} + \frac{\bar{X}_2 (1-\bar{X}_2)}{N_2}}$$

where

$\bar{X}_1$  = proportion of returns from sample 1

$\bar{X}_2$  = proportion of returns from sample 2

$z_{\frac{1}{2}\alpha}$  = level of confidence (.99)

$N_1$  = size of proportion 1

$N_2$  = size of proportion 2

The results were  $-0.0537 < p_1 - p_2 < 0.0191$ . These limits cover zero; thus there was a significant difference at the one per cent level in the use of warm colors in areas having less than 50 per cent sunlight and the use of those colors in areas having more than 50 per cent sunlight.

The same formula was used to test for significance of difference in the use of cool colors. The results were  $0.0001 < p_1 - p_2 < 0.0729$ . These limits do not cover zero; thus there was no significant difference at the one per cent level.

Hypothesis four was rejected. A significant difference at the one per cent level was found between the use of warm colors in areas having less than 50 per cent sunlight and the use of those colors in areas having more than 50 per cent sunlight.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

The purposes of this study were to determine the relative effectiveness of four different sales letter styles, the relative effectiveness of five different letterhead colors in sales letters, the relative effectiveness of two different order return forms, and the relative effectiveness of different colors in relation to percentage of sunlight in those areas where letters were received.

The test hypotheses for this study were:

1. No statistically significant differences in sales will result from the use of different styles in sales letters.
2. No statistically significant differences in sales will result from the use of different letterhead colors in sales letters.
3. No statistically significant differences in sales will result from the use of different order return forms in sales letters.
4. No significant differences in sales will result in different geographic areas from the use of different letterhead colors in those different areas.

Eighteen hundred sales letters were mailed to prospects randomly selected from a published list of automotive warehouses. Each letter contained a sales letter, a catalog sheet, a price sheet, and either a return post card or a return envelope. Three different styles (block, marginal message, and hanging indentation) were used. Five colors (white, yellow, pink, blue, and green) were used. The 1800 letters were divided

into thirty different combinations of style, letterhead color, and return order method. These different combinations were coded, and records were kept to determine the number of orders produced by each combination. At the time orders were received, a notation was made also of the percentage of sunlight in the area from which each order was received. A total of 57 orders was received--a return of 3.17 per cent.

Analysis of the data pertaining to style and letterhead colors was performed concurrently by an analysis of variance design. No significant difference was found. Both hypotheses one and two were accepted.

Analysis of the data for difference in the results obtained by the use of post cards and return envelopes resulted in a non-significant  $t$  score. Hypothesis three was accepted.

A Z test for significance of difference between different proportions indicated a significant difference between the use of warm colors (yellow and pink) in areas having less than 50 per cent sunlight and their use in areas having more than 50 per cent sunlight. No significant difference was found between the use of cool colors (blue and green) in areas having less than 50 per cent sunlight and their use in areas having more than 50 per cent sunlight. The fourth test hypothesis was rejected.



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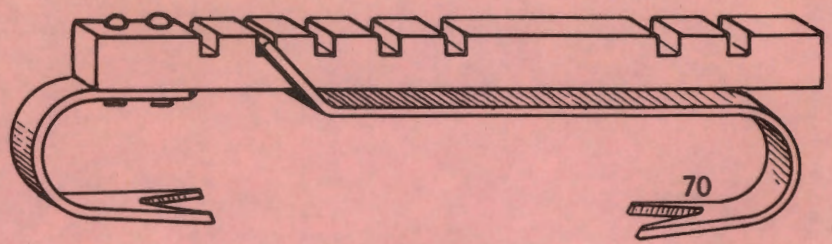
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APPENDIX A



HE DIDN'T SAY "GOSH"  
THEN FORGET IT...

...he did something about it.

Way back in '48, Mr. Chester Sumter dropped an automotive battery on his toe. It hurt. Mr. Sumter's strongest words were "gosh" and "dern." He said, "gosh."

Mr. Sumter is a short man and it didn't take his injured toe long to get the message to his brain that it was tired of having batteries dropped on it. It and all its fellow toes had been suffering this painful indignity since "A model" days.

His brain responded. Now why couldn't he ... with years of experience as a blacksmith, machinist, mechanic, and battery man ... make a tool he could handle batteries with without having the "dern" things drop on his toes?

He could. And HE DID!!!

He fashioned a crude, adjustable, steel and wood battery lifter that worked. But, like many new inventions, it didn't work perfectly all the time.

So Mr. Sumter improved it. He shaped and he reshaped... l e n g t h e n e d and shorted... and experimented with new materials. He used each new lifter himself, and he gave them away to his battery-handling friends. He listened to their comments. And he profited by them.

After eleven years of work... he had it! The one battery lifter that is light and easy to use with one hand, is as tough as its hickory handle, and will not drop a battery...... The greatest boon to toes since shoes!!

Mr. Sumter was happy. His toes no longer suffered. And he was able to protect the toes of a lot of other people who handled batteries. But he found that he had another problem... He was a great inventor, but he was not a salesman. He had no facilities or background for making his wonderful invention available to all those long-suffering people who had been dropping batteries for years.

#### HERE'S WHERE WE CAME IN

We obtained exclusive distributorship of the patented KWIK & EZEE battery lifter from Mr. Sumter. But we can't contact individually every man who handles batteries either.

**L**IBERTY TIRE & BATTERY SUPPLY, INC.

23 EMORY PARK

KNOXVILLE 17, TENN.

PHONE 5-1133

HERE'S WHERE YOU COME IN

The  
repeat-  
selling  
KWIK  
&  
EZEE  
sells  
itself  
with  
a  
two-  
minute  
demonstration

We are offering you a distributorship of the KWIK & EZEE. You can join our growing list of dealers from coast to coast who are making the KWIK & EZEE available to their customers.

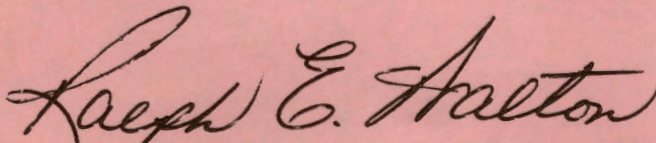
Every man in your territory who has the awkward job of handling batteries is a waiting prospect for the KWIK & EZEE. When he tries it, he'll buy it. He will like the way it easily and safely handles all sizes of batteries; the way it protects his toes and fingers; and the way it keeps battery acid away from his clothes.

Your customers will never hear of Mr. Sumter, but they will thank the man who made the KWIK & EZEE.

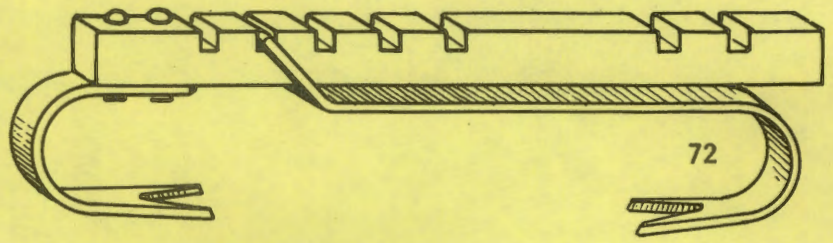
You, too, will thank him. You will like the way the KWIK & EZEE sells with a two-minute demonstration. And you will especially like the way your customers keep buying them... again and again.

The enclosed catalog and price sheets give you complete information on this easy-to-sell item. You will surely want to add the KWIK & EZEE to your present lines. You, your customers, we, and Mr. Sumter will all be happier when you do.

Won't you mail us your first gross order today in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope?



Ralph E. Walton  
President



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**L**IBERTY TIRE & BATTERY SUPPLY, INC.

23 EMORY PARK

KNOXVILLE 17, TENN.

PHONE 5-1133



### HERE'S WHERE YOU COME IN

We are offering you a distributorship of the KWIK & EZEE. You can join our growing list of dealers from coast to coast who are making the KWIK & EZEE available to their customers.

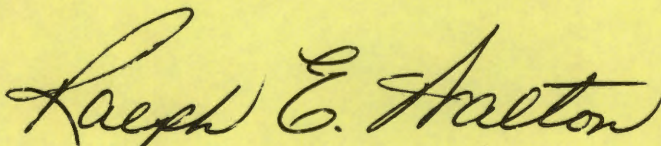
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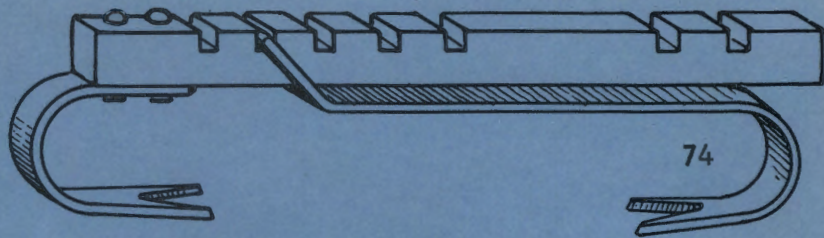
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Won't you check your first gross order on the stamped, easy-order card we have enclosed, and return it to us today?

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ralph E. Walton".

Ralph E. Walton  
President



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THEN FORGET IT...

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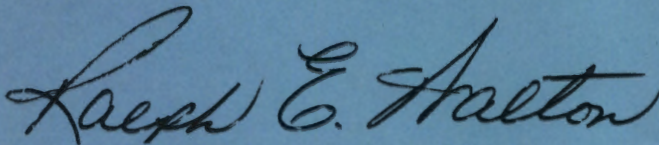
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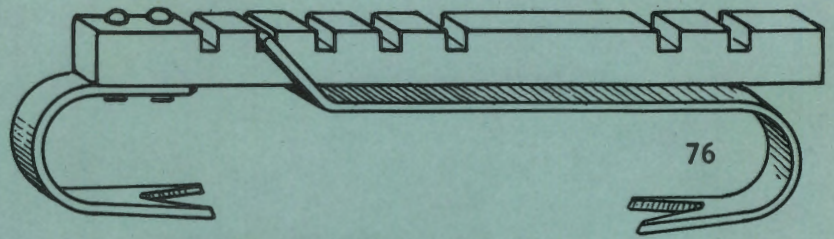
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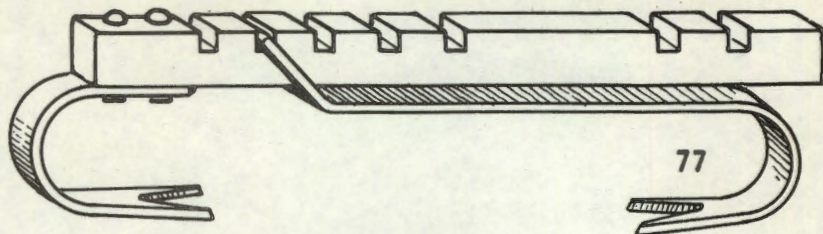
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23 EMORY PARK

KNOXVILLE 17, TENN.

PHONE 5-1133

# Liberty Tire & Battery Supply, Inc.

KWIK & EZEE PRODUCTS  
23 EMORY PARK  
KNOXVILLE 17, TENNESSEE

DISTRIBUTOR COST		JOBBER COST		SUGGESTED LIST	
More Than Gross	Less Than Gross	East of Miss.	West of Miss.	East of Miss.	West of Miss.
.95	1.05	1.35	1.45	2.75	2.95

TERMS: To-accounts rated favorably by Dun & Bradstreet, 2% 10th. Unrated accounts shipped C.O.D. unless credit references furnished with order.

PACKAGE: All lifters are individually boxed and packed in lots of one dozen per case.

F.O.B. KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

SHIPPING WEIGHT: Approximately 17½ lbs. per dozen.

This price list is subject to change without notice. It does not constitute an offer. We reserve the right to reject any or all orders.

Postage  
Will Be Paid  
by  
Addressee

No  
Postage Stamp  
Necessary  
If Mailed in the  
United States

**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**  
First Class Permit No. 905                      Knoxville, Tenn.

**LIBERTY TIRE & BATTERY SUPPLY, INC.**  
**23 EMORY PARK**  
**KNOXVILLE 17, TENN.**



Please enter our order for the following:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 gross KWIK & EZEE battery lifters @ \$.95
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 dozen KWIK & EZEE battery lifters @ \$1.05
- \_\_\_\_\_ Catalog Sheets - No Charge
- \_\_\_\_\_ Price Sheets - No Charge

-----  
Purchase Order No. \_\_\_\_\_ How Ship \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

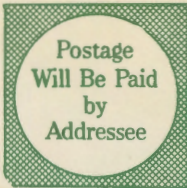
Firm Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Ordered by \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

**Return Post Card Enclosed in 900 Sales Letters**



**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**  
First Class Permit No. 905 Knoxville, Tenn.



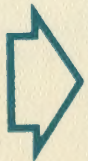
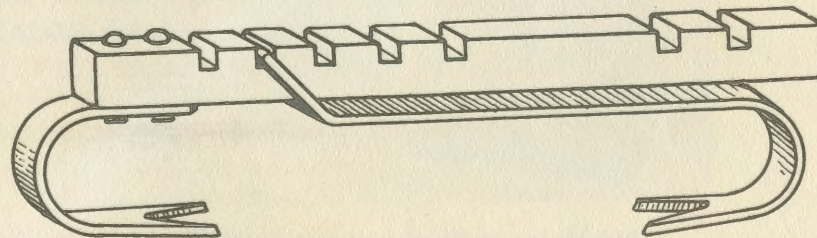
**LIBERTY TIRE & BATTERY SUPPLY, INC.**  
**23 EMORY PARK**  
**KNOXVILLE 17, TENN.**

Return Envelope Enclosed in 900 Sales Letters



The NEW  
and Improved  
**KWIK and EZEE**  
**BATTERY**  
**LIFTER**

PAT. NO. 2-435549



THE QUICKEST  
AND EASIEST LIFTER  
IN USE TODAY



HANDLES ALL  
6 AND 12 VOLT

Battery Service Men Like This Lifter Because it is  
"Quick and Easy" to Use With One Hand



**APPENDIX B**

LIST OF TEACHERS AND WRITERS ASKED TO EVALUATE THE SALES LETTER  
USED IN THE STUDY

- |                                                                                                       |                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dr. Jessamon Dawe<br>University of Texas<br>Austin, Texas                                             | Former President, American Business Writing Association                        |
| Mr. L. E. Frailey<br>1546 Santa Cruz Street<br>Laguna Beach, California                               | Author of numerous books and articles on direct mail                           |
| Mr. Henry Hoke<br>3 Bluff View Drive<br>Clearwater, Florida                                           | Former Editor, <u>The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising</u>                  |
| Dr. Raymond V. Lesikar<br>Louisiana State University<br>Baton Rouge, Louisiana                        | President, American Business Writing Association                               |
| Dr. Jack H. Menning<br>University of Alabama<br>Tusculoosa, Alabama                                   | Author and Co-Author of numerous texts and articles on business letter writing |
| Dr. John P. Reibel<br>California State Polytechnic College<br>San Louis Obispo, California            | Author and Co-Author of numerous books and articles on business letter writing |
| Mr. Kermit Rolland<br>Kermit Rolland and Associates<br>Box 371<br>Princeton, New Jersey               | Former teacher and currently professional correspondence consultant.           |
| Mr. Robert Stone, V. Pres.<br>National Research Bureau, Inc.<br>424 N. 3rd Street<br>Burlington, Iowa | Author of numerous books on direct mail                                        |
| Dr. Francis Weeks<br>University of Illinois<br>Champaign, Illinois                                    | Secretary and Editor, American Business Writing Association                    |
| Dr. Clyde W. Wilkinson<br>University of Florida<br>Gainesville, Florida                               | Author and Co-Author of numerous texts and articles on business communications |

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