

**The Effect of Including Cash With Questionnaires:
Respondent Guilt?**

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ABSTRACT

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In studies using questionnaire mailings the response rate of respondents is an important issue. Often respondents fail to respond in numbers high enough to conduct meaningful statistics. The time and money spent in attempting to elicit usable questionnaires is considerable. In the present note I report results when including a two dollar bill with questionnaires on a second mailing. The effect of including cash on the response rate is not clear. What is clear is that it had an effect because so many non-respondents returned the money.

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Administration of Questionnaires

An initial mailing was made to all senior managers in the ethical pharmaceutical industry on the Biznet database system for the SIC representing Pharmaceutical Preparations (2834). The initial number of questionnaires mailed was 363. The response from the first mailing was 62 for an initial response rate of 17%. This was deemed inadequate and a second mailing required.

A second mailing of 125 was sent. This mailing was more directed than the first. Annual reports were consulted to winnow out individuals no longer working. A two dollar bill was included in this mailing to promote respondent compliance.

Results of Second Mailing

Ten completed responses from the second mailing were received for an 8% response rate. However, these were not the only responses received.

Interestingly enough, while all respondents completing the second questionnaire kept the enclosed money many of those failing to complete the survey returned the money. Out of 115 non-respondents 67 (58%) returned the money with various comments in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided in the mailing.

Conclusion

Two preliminary conclusions may be reached; one, the cost of including money is less than 100% of total cash sent, and two, including money provokes a reaction in many potential respondents even when they fail to complete the questionnaire.

