

950 BUSINESSES YOU CAN START NOW!

2008
BUYER'S
GUIDE

Entrepreneur's StartUps

101

GREAT IDEAS

to Get You Started Today!

- 24 Smart Marketing Tips ● 8 Ways to Raise Money
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IT'S AMAZING WHAT a little color can do for your business. Just adding a border or a splash of blue to your invoices can help you see faster payment returns, says Patti Drinville, president of The PLD Group, which processes, prints and mails billing statements for small to midsize businesses. Drinville says the number-one complaint businesses receive about invoices and statements is that the customer doesn't understand what the document says, which results in people asking for clarification rather than sending in money. The PLD Group helps its clients design more effective invoices so they can spend less time fielding calls and more time conducting business. "We put psychology into it; we put color into it," Drinville says. "We do things that draw customers' eyes to what they owe."

COLOR PAYS

GIVE YOUR COMPANY'S INVOICES AN ARTSY TOUCH AND WATCH THE MONEY ROLL IN. *By James Park*

While small, these details can make a world of difference when it comes to customers' understanding of how to handle your company's invoices. Your goal, Drinville says, is to avoid looking like a small business. When customers get the impression that you're a small operation, your invoices and statements might not be taken as seriously as they should be. Take a look at your invoices and judge for yourself. Are they printed on plain, white paper, and do they look like they came straight out of the laser printer on your desk? Customers can tell.

Drinville recommends thinking about how your statements make your customers feel—don't make them feel as if all they are to you is a form letter. And don't forget to add color. "If you put a border around a box that says they owe this much money, they might see it," she says. "But if you put a blue border around the box, their eyes are going to go to it five seconds faster."

Finally, look into outsourcing your billing services. Doing so might save your business a lot of time and money.

In living color: Patti Drinville, president of The PLD Group, hopes to dress up company invoices one blue border at a time.

