

Have
you
used
your
bingo
card
lately?

Like most business and trade publications, *CEP* includes a reader service card- or *bingo card* as we sometimes call it- to enable you to request information from advertisers. Fill in your name and address, drop the card in the mail, and in a little while you have a catalog, data sheet or other literature from the company or companies whose "circle numbers" you indicated. It is a system that has been in place in *CEP* and other magazines for years. But with changes in technology and the way all of us access information, the question arises as to whether the traditional reader service card works for *CEP* readers. As we continue to institute what we hope are positive changes, we ask: Should we drop the bingo card?

The internet has made access to manufacturer information relatively easy and generally informative. Enlightened companies provide extensive product data and technical information to allow web users to receive immediate answers to questions. Product demonstrations, trial versions of software and other enhancements to their web sites make the wait for traditional mail seem anachronistic at best. Companies who have not fully embraced the internet offer "fax back" solutions to provide data. Again, the issues are timeliness and the need to satisfy a reader's need for information.

Responding to reader requests from overseas compounds the problem for manufacturers. Not only are time constraints an issue, but also are costs associated with shipping large amounts of data around the world. By the time the mail arrives in some distant place, the request for information may have been filled by a local source or the readers' needs may have changed.

Finally, we have observed over recent years that the number of reader service cards we process has declined. So, too, has the number of items circled on each reader service card. Research conducted recently among *CEP* readers tells us that 98% of you have internet access, so we assume that you use the net to seek answers or satisfy your curiosity about the products and services you see in the pages of *CEP*.

All of which leads us to the question, why have a reader service card in *CEP*? The answer, as you might expect, is that we will make changes to the way we provide reader service. Beginning in March, we will inaugurate a very different reader service system, one we feel is more in keeping with current technology, while it provides a way for readers to request information.

Changing the reader service system is part of our plan to improve *CEP*. Besides, most of us haven't played bingo in years.



Dave Colby,
Publisher
davec@aiiche.org

