



National Printing Research Council

Dedicated to providing members with the latest tools and resources to boost profits and sales!

[Published Jan. 27-28, 2022](#)

NPRC Mini-Survey #4 Tackles Envelope Pricing During A Period of Shortages

By John Stewart, Executive Director, NPRC

As always, we would sincerely like to thank the owners of 114 printing firms who took the time to complete our most recent survey. Without their support and prompt participation, detailed surveys such as this would simply not be possible. Thank you very much. JS

First, a couple of comments about future surveys. Up until this point, we have made it a point to provide the results of our min-surveys to all, regardless of participation. We are now considering charging a modest fee to those who wish to access the results of our survey but do not participate.

While we understand that some owners cannot always find the time to respond to our surveys, we feel it is unfair to those who participate to provide those who do not equal access to the data. Our typical surveys are purposely designed to be completed in 5-8 minutes, plus we typically provide a 2-3 window for responding.

Part of our rationale for charging those who do not complete our surveys is that people who are indeed willing to take 10-20 minutes out of their busy schedule to complete one of our surveys should receive special consideration, and that is why we offer them free access to our survey data.

In addition, these surveys typically involved 10-16 hours of labor to analyze, produce and publish and NPRC is simply not in a position to provide a stream of free industry data – someone has to pay the piper, so we think asking those who wish to download critical pricing data but can't find the time to participate is only fair. We hope you understand.

A Look at Industry Envelope Pricing...

Ok, now on to the data we gathered from our latest survey. The heart and soul of our most recent survey entailed asking about pricing of envelopes. We divided our questions into two basic categories (**Black vs. 4C**) and then subdivide each of those categories into two more – **Regular vs. Window envelopes**.

Note that our questions did not distinguish between production methods, although follow-up questions did deal with process. We simply asked the final selling price for these envelopes in three frequently requested quantities – 500, 1,000 and 2,500.

What follows are four tables that provide extremely accurate pricing data for the four categories of envelopes we surveyed. We only eliminating data (answers) on two occasions, because we deemed the data to be true outliers. The data we did end up using was extremely consistent. Note the similarity in pricing represented by Average Pricing and Median Pricing. This indicates a very consistent distribution of pricing data over a relatively narrow range, and thus means the pricing data is very consistent.

If your current prices for these types and quantities of envelopes are close to what we are presenting then fine. However, if your prices are varying by +/- 15% or more then your pricing is beginning to approach what might be considered “outlier” pricing. If you find your prices are consistently on high side and yet you have no problem obtaining those prices then then we would be the last to suggest making changes.

However, If your prices are noticeably and consistently below our industry averages by a significant margin then we suggest you avoid the popular refrain, “I can’t possibly get those prices in my market area. If I tried to get those prices in my market I would go out of business.” The facts are that many printers (a majority) are indeed getting those prices as our current survey can attest.

#10/24 REGULAR ENVELOPES (BLK)

	500 #10/24 Reg Env. - 1-S, Blk	1000 #10/24 Reg. Env - 1-S, Blk	2500 #10/24 Reg. Env, 1-S, Blk
COUNT	114	114	113
AVERAGE	\$95.42	\$140.78	\$266.06
MEDIAN	\$95.00	\$132.75	\$254.45
% Diff Avr to Med	0.4%	5.7%	4.4%
Margin of Error %	5.7%	3.4%	1.6%

#10/24 WINDOW ENVELOPES (BLK)

	500 #10/24 Win Env - 1-S, Blk	1000 #10/24 Win Env - 1-S, Blk	2500 #10/24 Win Env - 1-S, Blk
COUNT	114	114	113
AVERAGE	\$102.83	\$153.21	\$289.70
MEDIAN	\$100.85	\$148.78	\$278.32
% Diff Avr to Med	1.9%	2.9%	3.9%
Margin of Error %	5.2%	2.8%	1.3%

#10/24 REGULAR ENVELOPES (4C)

	500 #10/24 Reg Env. - 1-S, 4C	1000 #10/24 Reg. Env - 1-S, 4C	2500 #10/24 Reg. Env, 1-S, 4C
COUNT	112	112	112
AVERAGE	\$182.48	\$281.43	\$535.04
MEDIAN	\$180.96	\$279.00	\$518.37
% Diff Avr to Med	0.8%	0.9%	3.1%
Margin of Error %	2.8%	1.4%	0.6%

#10/24 WINDOW ENVELOPES (4C)

	500 #10/24 Win Env - 1-S, 4C	1000 #10/24 Win Env - 1-S, 4C	2500 #10/24 Win Env - 1-S, 4C
COUNT	112	112	111
AVERAGE	\$192.66	\$298.55	\$573.54
MEDIAN	\$190.59	\$291.12	\$540.83
% Diff Avr to Med	1.1%	2.5%	5.7%
Margin of Error %	2.1%	1.1%	0.4%

Comparing pricing for digitally-produced envelopes – The **2021-22 Digital Color Pricing Study** vs pricing today! Out of curiosity, we grabbed our copy of the aforementioned study and compared pricing. We found some very interesting data.

First, envelope pricing in the 2021-2022 Pricing Study was limited strictly to digitally produced envelopes while our current survey intentionally did not make that distinction as far as the production process was concerned.

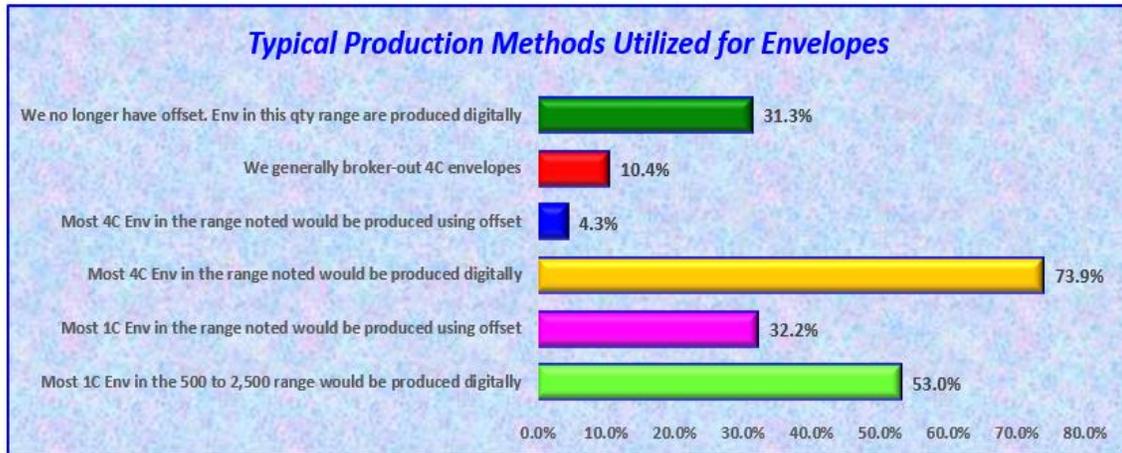
Interestingly enough, pricing for 1/0 envelopes in the last study were approximately 10-15% higher than what is noted in our current survey. That may be due to the fact that the 2021 Study reports digital only pricing as opposed to our current survey that does specify or distinguish the process being used.

One disturbing note or admission on our part is the fact that in the **2021-22 Digital Survey** we did not specifically distinguish and clarify that we were asking for “black” pricing when we said 1/0. We assume it is possible that some prior survey participants did in fact distinguish and separate pricing for 1C vs. pricing for black. We just don’t know.

Of equal interest is when we turned to the 2021-22 Study and compared 4C pricing for envelopes against our current survey results. The results were amazing! The pricing for 4C envelopes as gathered in early Jan. 2021 is amazingly similar (almost identical) to what we gathered in our recent survey.

As an example, the average price for 1,000 #10/24, 4/0 envelopes in early 2021 was \$286.05. The price today from our recent survey - \$281.43. If your curious about other quantities as well as regular vs. window you’ll have to do that on your own.

Production Methods Utilized

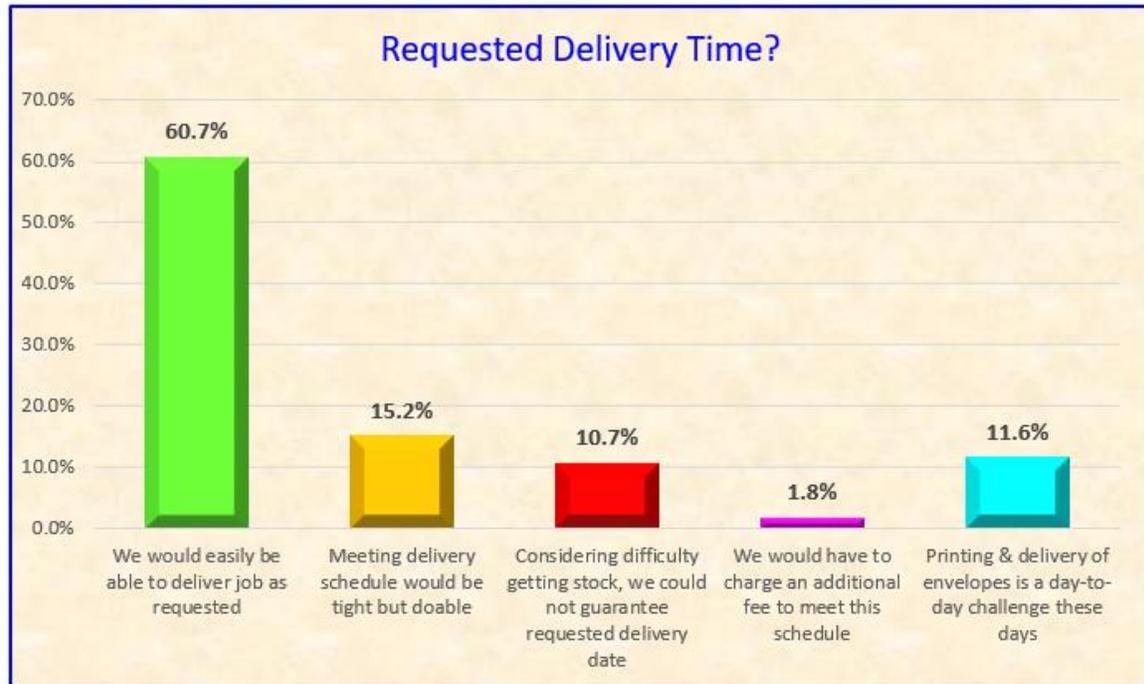


The chart above provides the answers to our question that asked printers to indicate the production method they were most likely to use to produce the 1C and 4C envelopes in the quantity range being surveyed. Since the second choice (the red bar) is not really a production method, the statistics might be distorted a bit.

Nonetheless, the clear implication of the answers to this question is that the vast majority of respondents (almost 74%) indicated that digital production would be the primary process used to produce 4C envelopes in the quantities being surveyed. Producing 1C envelopes are more likely to be split between digital and offset production, although as noted 31% of our survey respondents no longer have offset presses.

Real-World Delivery Time Expectations

We specified in our questions that the customer placed the order Monday AM, and requested a delivery time of Thursday, mid-day. We asked printers how they would characterize this request and how would they handle it. Below is a graph of the responses.



Production Methods Utilized

After asking specific questions regarding production methods, we allowed survey participants to provide additional commentary. We've made no effort to clean-up or otherwise interpret their comments.

- *I would outsource depending on the art work. Fine lines and some screens I would send out to print on a press.*
- *1000 pieces we do in house on digital color machine. All others b&w or color get sent out unless we are doing variable data at the same time.*
- *Full bleed 4C would be brokered out*
- *Depends on schedule - at higher quantities we would print offset for 1/C envelopes if pressman is available*
- *We would broker if not needed in 3 days or less.*
- *2,500 color we would probably broker, but at this timing we would do in house.*
- *We also have pricing tiers for 1 color and 2 color even though we produce these all digitally.*

- *You didn't ask for those prices so these are the two ends of my envelope pricing spectrum*
- *InkJet for envelopes*
- *We would generally broker out quantities above 1000 4C envelopes*
- *2500 Runs probably would go offset unless offset busy and digital not*
- *With enough time we would broker out 2k+ 4C envelopes and likely 2k+ Black ink envelopes as well.*
- *500 to 1000 we do digital. 2,500 and up single color, Black, reflex blue, red or green are brokered out but we loose the 3 day turnaround and a week and a half is normal.*
- *Inkjet*
- *Most 1c env over 1000 qty would be produced offset*
- *Most 4C Envelopes 1000 and under would be produced digitally. Most 4C envelopes 1001 and over would be produced using offset*
- *Pricing provided is using inkjet envelope press. Digital press prices are higher due to higher click costs.*
- *will at times run B & W digital depends on work flow...If 1 color PMS generally offset*
- *2,500 is the point at which we would move from digital to offset on 1 Color Envelopes.*
- *We use memjet for envelopes.*
- *We run our full color envelopes on our Canon C810 but we have to send out window envelopes.*
- *It would be tight schedule wise on the window send outs for the Thursday pick up, but it could happen*
- *if we got the order Monday morning.*
- *over 1000 we would probably do it on the Press*
- *500 - digital 1,000 and up - offset*

I would outsource depending on the art work. Fine lines and some screens I would send out to print on a press.

1000 pieces we do in house on digital color machine. All others b&w or color get sent out unless we are doing variable o

Full bleed 4C would be brokered out

Depends on schedule - at higher quantities we would print offset for 1/C envelopes if pressman is available

We would broker if not needed in 3 days or less.

2,500 color we would probably broker, but at this timing we would do in house.

We also have pricing tiers for 1 color and 2 color even though we produce these all digitally. You didn't ask for those prices.

500 AND 1000 DIGITAL 2500 OFFSET

InkJet for envelopes

We would generally broker out quantities above 1000 4C envelopes

2500 Runs probably would go offset unless offset busy and digital not

With enough time we would broker out 2k+ 4C envelopes and likely 2k+ Black ink envelopes as well.

500 to 1000 we do digital. 2,500 and up single color, Black, reflex blue, red or green are brokered out but we lose the 3

Inkjet

Most 1c env over 1000 qty would be produced offset

Most 4C Envelopes 1000 and under would be produced digitally. Most 4C envelopes 1001 and over would be produced

Pricing provided is using inkjet envelope press. Digital press prices are higher due to higher click costs.

will at times run B & W digital depends on work flow...If 1 color PMS generally offset

2,500 is the point at which we would move from digital to offset on 1 Color Envelopes.

We use memjet for envelopes.

We run our full color envelopes on our Canon C810 but we have to send out window envelopes. It would be tight schedule in the morning.

over 1000 we would probably do it on the Press

500 - digital 1,000 and up - offset

Comments Re Requested Delivery Times

Once again, after provided their answers regarding the requested delivery time, we allowed for further editorial comments. See below:

- *we have printing partners that we could send the job to locally in order to get this done on time – but we may have to increase the price.*
- *Typically, 5 working days*
- *Black printed envelopes would be quicker, the 4 color jobs would be challenging*
- *Maybe not always "easily" depending on our schedule, but we could accommodate most all requests.*

- *As we currently have inventory, the request is "easy." The inventory question next week? Or the following week?*
- *With stock levels being what they were a year ago, we would normally have this job done in 3-5 business days, could do it in 1-3 but would charge approx.. 10% more*
- *Even though it would be easily delivered we would let the customer know it would be tight and will require an additional fee to meet the schedule.*
- *Recent Supply chain issues have caused the price of Digital Window (Heat Tolerable) envelopes to balloon.*
- *Unless the stock is not available - who knows from week to week?*
- *At this time we would be able to deliver the envelopes in that time frame. Next week may be a different story.*
- *They would most likely be delivered to a local customer, the next day.*
- *It depends - 500 typically not an issue as we have several thousand in stock but higher quantities would depend on availability*
- *We would normally broker the 4c envelopes. To meet this deadline I would print digitally at a higher cost to the client*
- *If envelopes are in stock, no problem printing digitally in the timeframe.*
- *We would check envelope availability before guaranteeing the job, but in general should not be a problem.*
- *Although under most conditions this would be no problem, supply chain issues would be the only thing to hold us back from something like this. For now, we've been able to get #10 regs and #10 Wins when we need them even if it meant changing suppliers.*
- *I would say tight, but doable is the closest option above. But, I'd like to add that it just depends on the current workload, what's on the envelope press vs. other presses that may take precedent, and what does staffing look like this week.*
- *I would make sure I have the blank stock before pricing this job. If I don't and have to buy them from staples or Uline, I will adjust up the prices*
- *We would be able to meet this schedule because we have enough inventory currently but the last option would be accurate moving forward*
- *We generally have env on hand. Next week, though is anyone's guess!*
- *To date we have not had serious issues turning jobs quickly because we had stock and could still get most types delivered before we exhausted our inventory. Getting common envelopes is*

just now getting to be a real headache and it seems it is becoming critical

- *Note - If envelopes are on the shelf we meet the deadline - if not, the customer is out of luck*

Conclusion – As always, if you participated in this survey we want to express our appreciation. If you did not, we would like to encourage you (especially if you are a member of the [NPRC Listserv](#)) to participate in our next mini-survey. We try not to overburden you with surveys, and our goal is to keep these surveys to no more than 5-6 questions on a very specific subject, whether it be pricing or more general in nature.

If you have any suggestions for a future mini-survey, please sent us an email at: membership@printingresearch.org.

Sincerely,
John Stewart, Executive Director, NPRC
Melbourne, FL 32904

P.S. An interesting note on our statistics. Had we moved ahead on our report after the 56 surveys instead of waiting the full 2.5 days that we allowed for the survey, the average price would have varied by less than \$1-2 depending upon the quantity. The median would have varied by far less than a dollar. We have known this for years. When we conduct a survey, we can typically estimate the final average and median numbers based upon the first 25-35 responses. However, there is a bias among many individuals who take surveys that the greater the level of participation the greater the accuracy in the final data.