

Container Updates

Availability (or lack thereof) of hardsided containers was discussed at the January NAMMU Toronto Chapter meeting. Mr. Gervais, Canada Post, provided the following information:

- There is a sufficient supply of lettertainers available, however maintaining the right inventories in local plants across Canada has been a problem and Canada Post is taking measures to improve. Lettertainers were sent to a centralized location (NECF) to ensure they are cleaned out before reuse and this had led to lower than required inventories in different plants across the country.
- LFTs (letterflatainers) are for internal RVU use only and are not to be distributed to mailers. If mailers are provided LFTs in error, they are asked to return them to the RVU.
- There is a shortage of flats tubs across Canada. Canada Post has ordered 100,000 new tubs which will be arriving weekly starting in February. They have also ordered 30,000 cardoxes (cardboard flats tubs) to help with supply until all the new tubs have arrived.

The good news is that Canada Post is aware of the localized shortages and is working to address them both with new tubs and changes to the distribution network. Please keep us informed if you are having difficulty accessing lettertainers and flat tubs so we can keep Canada Post updated about local supply issues.

USPS Price Increase

The USPS has increased postage rates for the second time in less than a year. These changes went into effect on January 22, 2012. Some notes on the new rates:

First Class Mail: The USPS has increased the weight band for First Class Mail from 1 to 2 ounces (28.5 to 57 grams). You may now mail up to 2 ounces for the same price as 1 ounce. There is no requirement to include a BRM. This leaves extra room for additional marketing material to ride along with the First Class mail.

- There is now no difference between 3 digit and AADC rates.

Standard Mail: Small increases for most mailers. Non-profit mailers are the big winners with very small increases and, in some cases, decreases in rates.

Parcels: Electronic Delivery Confirmation is now free (previously \$0.19).



Choosing a Quality List

[The following article by Kristi Kanitz, General Manager, will appear in the February issue of Direct Marketing. If you do not already subscribe to this industry newspaper, subscriptions are available at <http://www.dmn.ca/subscribe.htm>.]

As those in the direct marketing field are aware, the three critical elements determining the success of a mailing are the list, the offer and the design. I'll leave the offer and design advice to the marketing gurus; as an address quality advocate, my interest is always in the data. And with experts telling marketers that up to 80% of the success of a mailing is in the list, it becomes even more important to make sure that list is high-quality.

Targeting is a proven method to increasing the return on investment of a direct mail piece. You can have the best offer and an award-winning design but if you aren't mailing to the right recipient, your marketing dollars have gone to waste. Using demographic and geographic data, mailers can choose the right audience for their message in the area that best suits their business.

So once you have nailed down your ideal demographic in just the right area, all you need to do is buy the list, right? Well, not so fast – there are a few more considerations before you purchase a list and they have to do with where the file came from and how it has been treated since then.

Ask your list broker where the records originated and how often they are updated. I have received mailings to my home from obviously purchased lists that still have the name of the occupant from 15 years ago. The mailers clearly didn't do their homework. Ask the source of the data: is the list broker buying subscriber data from a telecom or publisher? Are they scraping online directories? Collecting business cards at trade shows?

Once you know where the records came from, you need to know how often they are updated. Does the list provider guarantee a percent deliverability? If you are producing Addressed Admail, unless you pay a fee to have undeliverables returned, you won't even know if your piece reached the intended doorstep. How can the list provider reassure you that these are deliverable addresses? How often do they update the lists with new recipients? Do they verify addresses and weed out undeliverables?

It may sound like common sense, but did the list provider run the records through SERP-recognized software to ensure the addresses are correct and complete? You should ask for a copy of the Statement of Accuracy to verify this. Pay particular attention to the Excluded Address information if you are buying a B2B list; this designation is a flag that the addresses are missing something that could vitally affect deliverability – normally a suite or unit number. Canada Post allows these addresses to be listed as Valid or Corrected but they may, in fact, be undeliverable as addressed.

Removing duplicates is the next item to check with the list provider. Have they removed identical records from the data and, if so, what criteria did they use – address only? Address and name information? Do they automatically de-dupe the file as updated addresses are added? Have they run this file against a national suppression list such as the Canadian Marketing Association's Do-Not-Mail list? If you are buying phone numbers along with names, have they run against the Do-Not-Call database? Make sure you ask for documentation showing when these processes were run.

Do you have an option to run the file against your in-house records to ensure you are not paying for records you already have? This could be run as a suppression against your existing list. If you have an in-house do-not-mail file, you might want the option to exclude addresses based on your list as well. There is no point in purchasing records you already have or know you will not be mailing to.

National Change of Address (NCOA) is one area that a list provider can't help you. Terms of the NCOA license prevent updating of movers unless the list owner has a business relationship with the recipient. Since this is normally not the case with a provider or broker, you will need to take this step yourself before mailing. This is especially important as the list gets older; basic mail forwarding with Canada Post only occurs for 6 months. This means recipients could be out of date before you even purchase the list.

The NCOA data stretches back 6 years and is an important step to ensuring you are mailing to the intended recipient of your offer. Keep in mind, however, that as the owner of a purchased list, you are also not entitled to update your own files with move information as the recipients do not yet have a business relationship with your company. To ensure you are in compliance with the terms of NCOA use, run NCOA before every mailing but do not upload matches into your original database.

Once you have purchased a list, the data work is not finished. It is important to ensure you complete your own address hygiene procedures before mailing. Address correction through a SERP-recognized software is vital, and mandatory above certain volumes. Take a look at your Statement of Accuracy and remove or update invalid and excluded addresses. Run your own duplicate checks especially if you are merging the purchased list with others. Use a suppression list – national or in-house – to give your mail the best chance to reach a welcoming recipient. And as mentioned earlier, run your list against the NCOA data to make sure your mail is reaching the recipient you intended.

A targeted list is vital to the success of a mailing. Using the steps listed above will help ensure that the targeted list is complete, correct and current. Once your address hygiene processes are complete, all you need to do is pair those recipients with a fantastic offer and an eye-catching design and you are off to the races. I'll be watching my mail!

Web Training Available

Flagship Software continues to offer web training! If you are a new customer, would like a refresher course on **iAddress™** or if you have new hires, please contact Carolyn at carolyn@flagshipsoftware.com to schedule a web session.

