



Brief



Mission Critical: Intelligent Mail Barcode

Gerri Harrison

Director, Business Development
Kern, Inc

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It's 2:00 AM, three days after a company critical mailing! Your executives are anxiously awaiting the results and your call center is ramped up to handle the anticipated higher call volume. At best, you can tell your executives that the mailing was completed on time, but unfortunately the call center will just have to wait for the customers to begin contacting them.

But what if you could provide information to your executive team about the delivery status of every mail piece so the call center ramp up could be planned? The Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMB) could provide you with this information, as well as a multitude of other valuable data depending on how it is implemented within your company.

If your company values time in transit and delivery to customers, then IMB can provide this wealth of information. If you are concerned about knowing when customer's payments will be reaching your processing center, then IMB could be the answer for preprinted courtesy, business reply envelopes, and payment coupons.

While mailers attempt to assimilate the vast amount of Intelligent Mail Barcode information and rally the internal teams necessary for successful implementation, the main focus is on insuring the continuation of the deepest USPS® discounts available for out-going mail. No one wants to miss an opportunity to further deepen discounts, or worse yet, not be prepared and lose workshare Postal discounts.

While there is currently no finalized USPS summary documentation regarding IMB, now is the time to gather all available data that pertains to your mailing classes and be prepared to be an early adopter in May, 2009. Have you completed your application? How many Mailer Identification (MID) numbers will you require? More than one request may necessitate a detailed business case be provided to the Postal One team in Memphis, who are the gatekeepers of the Mailer IDs.

Will you track every mailpiece by assigning a unique identifier? Since the individual unique number content is left up to the mailer, what information is most important to your company – date of the mailing, unique number for every customer mailpiece with a database link to update internal records, or other information? Or are you a mailer that has zero need for mailpiece tracking? Ponder this question at length before you answer yes to that question. If indeed the answer is yes, then you will need only apply and receive your MID and convert your current POSTNET to IMB. And remember you can always add unique numbers for tracking at a later date.

As important as the successful implementation of the IMB will be to the USPS and to the mailing industry, have you given thought to the valuable information this new tool can bring to your company? What reporting will you build with the data received? You may be receiving vast amounts of data and it's up to each company to decide how they will successfully implement a reporting mechanism that provides those elements that are important within each company. What is meaningful to one company may have zero value to another, so build reporting based on in-depth due diligence within your company's walls.

Quite often postcards are not included in documentation and mailers must remember to include the IMB on the outbound card as well as the reply if a double postcard is being utilized.

This is also a good time to review every item in your inventory catalog to determine if any envelopes are obsolete and can be recycled. (Think Green)!

The wealth of data rich information that will be virtually at your fingertips via IMB can make the challenges of implementation more than worthwhile.

As you transition from Postnet to IMB, seek out peers, industry organizations, and USPS experts to answer questions and keep your team on track for a successful implementation.

Gerri Harrison is the Director of Business Development for Kern, Inc and has dedicated 30 years to the mailing industry. If you would like any information on mailing solutions from Kern or just want to talk mail, you can contact Gerri directly at 888-KERN-INC or via email at gharrison@kerninc.com