

A.M.

LetterLink

Your Resource for Direct Mail Marketing



Published by A.M. Mailing Services, Inc.

Vol. 10 No. 2



“Providing seamless
direct mail solutions”

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INSIDE...

- Keep copy simple
- Use eyeflow for better design
- Entice with summary teasers
- New A.M. website is unveiled
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Is dirty data reducing your ROI?

Last year, the USPS handled 1.72 billion pieces of undeliverable-as-addressed (UAA) mail. These mailpieces were forwarded, returned or thrown away at a cost of \$159 million to the postal service. It is estimated that the cost to mailers is even greater.

Mailers with UAA within their database, incur additional costs. Forwarding and return service fees add up if those services are requested. Discarded mail wastes postage, printing, production and list costs. Losing touch with a customer results in lost sales. And what if your next best customer was among the UAA mail in your list?

The USPS is increasing the requirements of the Zip+4 CASS certification program. Their goal is to eliminate UAA resulting from poor quality addresses. Beginning August 1, 2007 a new CASS Certified ZIP + 4 software will be required by all mailers. It will include Delivery Point Verification (DPV) and Location Accuracy Coding System (LACS) software. This software will validate the deliverability of an address before adding the ZIP + 4 Code.

DPV is a database containing 165 million delivery points serviced by USPS. It verifies the accuracy of deliverable addresses. It will provide critical clues as to why an address cannot be DPV confirmed.

LACS provides a 911 address conversion matching tool. This identifies and converts addresses that have been changed by municipalities that have implemented emergency response systems.

Those addresses that do not have a valid primary address number will not receive a ZIP + 4 Code. Initial tests have shown that on average, two percent of records will be identified as UAA. These records should not be mailed without taking further corrective action.

There are additional address quality tools that can help improve deliverability. Address Element Correction (AEC) services focuses on inaccurate addresses that did not match a Zip+4 through CASS Certification. It will add missing address elements and correct secondary number assignments for office and apartment numbers. The USPS National Customer Support Center or your lettershop vendor can provide these services.

Another tool called AEC II provides mailers an additional level not offered by software programs – a human element. Records that have failed CASS, DPV, LACS and AEC methods of correction are transmitted to USPS local Delivery Units. The AEC II process gives letter carriers an opportunity to identify and fix resident names or bad addresses that are on their route.

Finally, your database should be scrubbed through National Change of Address (NCOA) frequently. About 1.5% of all households will move every month. That means that 18% of the addresses in a consumer database will change within a year.

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DM News & Tips

Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS)

We've become a world of impatient readers. People scan their way across text. They are looking for meaning and relevance in what they read. When writing for direct mail, web pages or any marketing materials, the KISS principal should be adhered to. If it is possible to cut a word, always cut it. If a two-syllable word can be replaced with just one syllable, then replace it. Get rid of complicated words and write clearly. You'll have better readers and more effective marketing.

Don't be funny with DM

Humor is taboo in direct mail copywriting. Direct mail does not have the luxury of TV or radio, where planting a memory and good feeling is the goal. The offer must be strong enough to get someone to stop what they're doing and make a decision to respond. The DM mailpiece is the salesman and it must make a sale. People take their purchases very seriously. Nobody wants to be sold by a clown.

Design envelopes for eyeflow

The first thing that a recipient looks at on an envelope... is their name. If it's misspelled, you've already lost the sale. The second element they'll see is a teaser or photo near the address block. A good, relevant teaser can hold their interest. Then they look at the corner card/return address to see who sent this. Finally, the eye will look at the postage stamp, meter impression or postage indicia. Stamps and meter look less like DM and will usually beat a permit. If the envelope is turned over to be opened, then it's done its job.

Survey shows DM best for acquisition

The media usage survey, conducted recently by Target Marketing, provided some interesting results. It took a peek at how marketers rate direct response media. Out of 15 direct marketing methods, direct mail was rated the best ROI generator (32 percent) for customer acquisition. E-mail was second at 22 percent followed by catalogs at 10 percent. The best ROI method for customer retention was e-mail at 35 percent and direct mail at 31 percent followed by telemarketing at 10 percent. Combining these direct marketing channels for acquisition and retention provides the best media mix.

New window shapes make a splash

Odd window shapes on outer envelopes are being seen in the mailstream. Marketers are altering the shape of the traditional rectangular window on outer envelopes to grab attention and get the envelope opened. Various window shapes include ovals, oversized squares and "L" shaped windows. They add some creativity by providing more interesting ways to show messaging through the window...which can draw a reader in.

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The NCOA file contains about 145 million records for individuals, families and businesses that have moved in the last 4 years. NCOA will provide a new address on records that are in the file, or identify those records that have no address available. Consider this, for every 10,000 names you mail, 1,800 records will become undeliverable each year unless a consistent address correction plan is in place.

By reducing UAA in the mailstream, you'll reduce your costs, improve ROI and help the USPS provide better service.



Address quality is important for improving mail deliverability. Inkjet systems at A.M. Mailing Services, Inc. print addresses that USPS automated equipment can easily scan.

The new Zip + 4 CASS/LACS/DPV software is now available at A.M. Mailing Services, Inc. Don't wait until this new requirement becomes effective in August 2007. You can improve your address quality by contacting your A.M. representative to schedule a list cleanup. Call 608-884-3452.

GUEST COLUMN EDITOR'S NOTE: Article provided by ©North American Publishing Company. All Rights reserved. This article originally appeared in TM Tipline, Target Marketing Magazine's weekly e-mail newsletter offering practical tips and solutions for profitable direct marketing. To learn more, visit www.targetmarketing.com.

Take a Different Tack with Teasers

By Christen Gruebel

Go from blah ... to aha! Which tactic does one industry veteran swear turns an ordinary package into a mailbox-busting control?

As the opening sentences gamely attempt to imitate, baiting a prospect with tantalizing queries is a good way to get your outer envelope opened. But although the draw of sheer curiosity is strong, direct mail copywriter, Ken Scheck, suggests a more efficient way to capitalize on the power of teasers is to use them to summarize the key points of packages with extremely detailed content.

By their short-and-sweet nature, teasers can help appeal to the various informational needs of a target audience while still being exciting to read. This tactic—one Scheck has used to great success on mailings he's created for Harvard Health Publications—allows for an enticing outline of topics to be covered and increases the odds that prospects will open the envelope because they're more likely to see something that speaks to them specifically. "Teasers give you an opportunity to put a number of things on an envelope from different subject areas, so that instead of loading all your ammo into one headline, you can hit them with a number of different things," says Scheck. He cites a health publication as an example, "You can talk about the heart, you can talk about weight loss, you can talk about a couple of different things ... it gives you more of a likelihood that prospects will see something that interests them."



Take a tour of A.M. at their new website... go to www.ammailing.com

The new website for A.M. Mailing Services, Inc. is now open. It culminates over a year of planning and writing by the A.M. Web Committee. They gave it a fresh look, updated the content and added many new features. It is easy to navigate and provides quick access to employee contacts. How to information helps describe the services available for the wide variety of direct mail projects offered. When you visit the site, here are some of the features you'll find...

- What the A.M. stands for
- Team A.M. photos and bios
- Unique capabilities and services
- Information Request and Quote forms
- Direct mail tips
- Index of past LetterLink articles
- Frequently asked questions
- Glossary of industry terms
- Case studies and direct mail solutions

The site is intended to be both informative and easy for customers to use. New information will be added on a regular basis. Providing Seamless Direct Mail Solutions is the goal. If you have any comments or suggestions, e-mail them to webcommittee@ammailing.com.

7 tips for better direct mail letters

A personalized laser letter will usually beat a generic letter for readership and response. But what if your budget won't allow for laser printing? What if your list is not clean enough to trust the accuracy of a Dear John salutation? Here are some tricks that will help a generic letter appear more personal.

1. **Use an exact date** - A specific month, date and year makes the letter look personal and more like First Class mail. If unsure of the mail date you can simply put the word "Monday." Try it.
2. **Personalize the salutation (without a name)** - Dear Skiing Enthusiast. Dear College Professor. Dear Chevy Owner. This tells the recipient that you know something about them and maybe share an interest.
3. **Indent all paragraphs** - This makes text easier to read. It looks friendlier too! Tests have proven this to be effective.
4. **Keep paragraphs short** - Format each paragraph for seven lines (not sentences) of copy or less. Short paragraphs are easier to read.
5. **Close quickly** - Summarize the offer, ask for the order and shut up!
6. **Sign in blue** - Include a signature. Pre-print the signature in blue ink. Pay the printer a little extra for this spot color. It helps.
7. **Always use a P.S.** - It's a fact that 80% of people will read the postscript before they read the letter. Reinforce the offer with a guarantee or a bonus in the P.S.

Try these tips and start writing more effective direct mail letters.

This is one of the many helpful articles you'll find on the new A.M. website. Go to www.ammailing.com and click on the Direct Mail Tips link at the bottom of the Home Page.

Read more about direct mail marketing in A.M. Letterlink past issues.
Visit www.ammailing.com

Team A.M. hosts Postal Rate Seminar at Olympia Resort

Significant postal rate increases are scheduled to go into effect on May 14, 2007. The sales and marketing department of A.M. Mailing Services, Inc. helped customers prepare by hosting a seminar in April. The emphasis was to inform mailers of the new rate structure and show them how to best plan for it.

Three plans were strongly emphasized. The first was to clean up your database to reduce wasted postage, save on production costs and improve ROI. The second was to redesign a mailpiece to fit the weight and shape requirements of the new postal regulations. And the third plan was to take advantage of the postal discounts allowed for drop shipping or commingling mail.

Direct mail marketers from the publishing, financial, health services and other industries learned ways to offset the rate increase and avoid any surprises.



Robin Jenkins, Project Manager and Liz Ochs, Human Resources were on hand to help with attendee registration at the Postal Rate Seminar.



Joe Schick, Director of Postal Affairs for Quad Graphics was one of the speakers at the Postal Rate Seminar. Schick explained how Postal Reform will change the way many marketers prepare their mail.



Marty Ochs, President of A.M. Mailing Services, Inc., shared some ideas with attendees at the seminar. L-R Rachelle Washington with Minacs Worldwide, Paul Piotrowski with USPS, Ochs and Dan Topel, Sales Manager of A.M.



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Inside:

**Your LetterLink Newsletter Vol. 10 No. 2
 from A.M. Mailing Services, Inc.**

Mark your calendar for these print, mail and marketing events

April 30-May 1, CHICAGO DM DAYS & EXPO

Chicago, IL, Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers, two days of exhibits, seminars and networking for direct marketers, sponsored by the Chicago Association of Direct Marketers, visit the A.M. Mailing sales team at booth #302, for more information call 312-849-2236 or visit www.CADM.org.

May 8-11, MAILCOM '07

Atlantic City, NJ, Atlantic City Convention Center, 4 day conference and exhibition for the mail communications industry, register online at www.mailcom.org.

May 15, WPPC INLAND GRAPHICS/PLUS DIGITAL TOURS

Milwaukee, WI, Two printers with very different capabilities will open their common door for a tour of their facilities, sponsored by the Wisconsin Publishers Production Club, for details call Marty Ochs at 608-838-9899 or visit www.wppc.org.

June 22, AMA SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

Chicago, IL, University of Chicago, Hot Topic seminar sponsored by the American Marketing Association, for more information go to www.marketingpower.com/htsearch

July 21, CADM COUNTRY CLUB DAYS

Bloomington, IL, Indian Lakes Golf Course, scramble golf outing,

dinner and door prizes sponsored by the Chicago Association of Direct Marketing, for registration and details call 312-849-2236.

Sept 9-12, GRAPH EXPO

Chicago, IL, McCormick Place, Annual printing and mailing show, contact 703-264-7200 for details.

Oct. 16-18, DM DAYS

Chicago, IL, McCormick Place, three day conference and expo sponsored by the Direct Marketing Association, call 866-229-2386 for details.

Moving? Want someone added to this mailing list?

Please correct my name and/or address
 YES – add me to the LetterLink mailing list
 Fax 608-884-8949 E-mail info@ammailing.com

Name _____

Company _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail _____



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