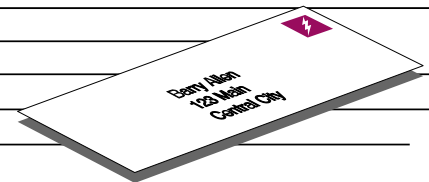


# LetterLink

Your Resource for Direct Mail Marketing



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"Providing direct mail marketing solutions"

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## INSIDE...

- New postage rates in 2007
- 8 tips for finding typos
- Plan a mailing timeline
- Find look alike customers
- Calendar of events

## Proof your mailpiece or pay the price

Nothing in marketing is uglier than finding a typo on your mailpiece...*after it has been printed!* Your jaw drops, your stomach turns and a cold sweat forms on your forehead. You gasp, you swear and start looking for somebody else to blame. Has this ever happened to you?

A single character typo can put a direct mail piece into the recycle bin. Phone numbers, web addresses, sale prices or misspelled names are common errors. Proofing errors have caused whole catalogs to be reprinted and completed mailings to be a total loss.

How do you avoid this scenario? First and foremost, never proof your copy alone. It's difficult to catch your own mistakes.

**Begin the proofreading process by letting your first draft, get cold.** Set it aside for an hour, a day or a week. Always proof from hard copy. Change the look by printing it out on yellow paper or enlarging the print. Cover the lines with a piece of blank paper that keeps you from speed-reading. Read very slowly and if possible read out loud. End with a final computer spell check These are some of the things to look for.

- Check capitalization for proper names, the pronoun "I" and at the beginning of sentences.
- Read names, phone numbers and addresses out loud. Test phone numbers and web addresses if not sure of accuracy.
- Proofread headings, salutations and bold copy. They get overlooked.
- Double-check unusual fonts like italics and script. They are harder to read.
- Look for little words. *Or, of, it, is, an,* are often interchanged.



A good proofreading technique is to double space copy and cover lines with a ruler.

**You'll find typos, spelling errors and grammatical errors you missed when writing.** You'll probably rewrite whole sentences and paragraphs for a better flow. Now make copies of this second draft and enlist your crew of proofreaders. Make sure they know whether they are editing or proofreading. Editing is rewriting. Proofreading is checking for errors. Sometimes you'll want them to do both. Always include one person who has no knowledge of the product, service or industry that is being promoted. That person will usually find a word or sentence that makes no sense to them *and* to some of the people on your mailing list.

**No proofreading process is perfect.** Mistakes can still happen. So now what? Call your printer or lettershop. There may be a solution. Here is one example of a lemon turned into lemonade.

## DM News & Tips

### Wisconsin leads nation in paper production

For the past 50 years, Wisconsin has led the nation in paper production. The American Forest and Paper Association reports that Wisconsin mills produced over 5 million tons of paper last year. Maine ranked second with 3.5 million tons. As shipping costs rise, printers located near the paper mills are experiencing a competitive edge.

### New postal rate case filed

The Postal Service Board of Governors has filed a rate case with the Postal Rate Commission. If approved, postage rates would increase in the spring of 2007. The proposal calls for a 3-cent increase in the price of a First Class Stamp. The overall increase proposed for Standard Mail is 9 percent. The increase is in response to changes in operations and the marketplace. The new price structure will encourage mailers to make adjustments and help the post office process mail more effectively.

### USPS to begin tracking mail

A new four-state barcode will be going into effect for letter mail on September 1, 2006. This new 31 digit barcode will enable the postal service to track every mailpiece through the entire system. It will help cut USPS processing costs and reduce the amount of space needed on a mailpiece for barcoding. The system will be expanded to flats by early 2007. Use of the four-state barcode will be voluntary at first. It could take several years for the full transition to take place.

### Poor data costs 7.3% in lost revenue

In a recent survey, U.S. businesses blamed data quality for lost revenue in excess of 7 percent. QAS, a division of Experian, found that inaccurate data costs businesses money because of wasted resources and lost productivity. The biggest problem came from duplicated data and incorrectly addressed mail. They found that poor data quality affects how consumers perceive an organization's brand.

### Build e-mail lists with DM

E-mail marketers have found direct mail and offline media the best sources for compiling their lists. In a recent survey of e-marketers, 64% reported that offline advertising and direct marketing worked best for obtaining fresh e-mail addresses. The study revealed that trade shows were the second best source at 54%.

Catalogs and direct mail provide strong response tools. They drive prospects to a web site or convince them to fill out a reply card and send it in.

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A catalog company was sending out a selfmailer announcing their new 800 number. Over 200,000 pieces were printed. The 800 number was printed on the inside panel of the folded selfmailer. One digit of the number was incorrect. To reprint the piece would have cost \$50,000. The customer called A.M. Mailing Services. The A.M. sales and production team came up with a solution. They suggested printing a sticky note label with the correct number. Then they designed a system that would unfold the selfmailer, affix the label over the error and then refold the mailpiece. The cost of the fix was a fraction of reprinting. The label drew more attention to the 800 number and it looked like it was part of the planned design.

This disaster was averted. But it would have been a lot less costly had the number been proofed properly or tested with a quick phone call.

**FREE MAILPIECE DESIGN PROOFING – A.M. Mailing Services encourages customers to send us a proof before printing. We'll check it for proper indicia, address area and mailpiece design. E-mail to [info@ammailing.com](mailto:info@ammailing.com) or fax 608-884-8949.**

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## Eight Hot Spots for Direct Mail Typos

**By Hallie Mummert,**  
editor in chief, Target Marketing

Where are the eight most likely places in a direct mail campaign for a typo to appear? According to Gayl Curtiss, managing director of The Hacker Group, a direct marketing agency in Bellevue, Wash., marketers should pay close attention to the following elements of their direct mail campaigns:

1. Phone numbers, both call and fax—it's easy to transpose numbers.
2. The company's name—anywhere it appears.
3. Signatory's name—you often don't have a proofing tool to verify the correct spelling.
4. Terms and conditions—proofers often don't read them.
5. Address information—wherever it appears.
6. Headlines—they're big and people blow right through them.
7. Letter set-up—vendors often retype perfect copy from laser mechanicals.
8. Highly technical terms—they often either don't pass spell check or proofers don't know they're spelled incorrectly; for example, thinking (a computing term) often is changed to thinking ... which is a typo!

Gayl Curtiss can be reached at [gcurtiss@hackergroup.com](mailto:gcurtiss@hackergroup.com).



## Plan ahead for the political mail season

Political campaign years are busy times for printers, lettershops and the U.S. Postal Service. They can put a strain on the direct mail marketing industry during the busy 4th quarter of a political year. Candidates, campaign organizers and direct marketers should do some advance planning. Allowing extra lead-time will reduce the risk of a late in home delivery.

The USPS delivery service area has grown to over 144 million homes and businesses nationwide. The postal system has automated their processing to keep up with growth and to keep costs down. They have also reduced personnel. Normal delivery times are never guaranteed. During busy months, slower delivery should be assumed.

Envelope converters, printers and lettershops all have maximum production capacities for any given day or week. Creating a timeline and scheduling work with vendors in advance will help keep your project on track.

Here are some planning recommendations for political mailers and direct marketers.

- Verify the status of your mailing permit or nonprofit authorization.
- Get mailpiece design advice from a mailing professional before printing.
- Clean up mailing lists through NCOA, CASS Certification and deduping.
- Research and obtain mailing lists for prospecting to voters or new customers.\*
- Obtain quotes for printing, mail production and postage.
- Prepare a timeline working backwards from your in-home delivery date.

Political candidates and campaign committees can request political tagging. Your lettershop can attach Red Tag 57 to a political campaign mailing. The post office will give these mailings special handling. Planning ahead and allowing extra time will help get your mailing delivered on time.

**\*A.M. Mailing maintains a current voter file for the State of Wisconsin and provides databases for resident, consumer and business lists. Call 608-884-3452 for list counts.**

## Find new customers right next door

An excellent way to identify new prospects is to create a model of your best customers. What's their income, age, gender and lifestyle? Where do they live, work or play? With this information, direct marketers can find similar people within compiled national databases.

Appending demographics to your customer database is one way to create a model. But what if you don't know the demographics of your best customer? A faster and less expensive way is the Good Neighbor Program.

The Good Neighbor Program identifies people on the same street, in the same zip+4 as your best customers. There are only 4 to 6 households in a given zip+4. It is highly likely that these neighbors of your best customers will be very similar in income, age and lifestyle. As the saying goes, "birds of a feather flock together."

Mailing to the neighbors on the street of your best customers will reach a prime prospective audience. Neighbors talk. They can provide testimonials and referrals for your products or services.

CASS Certification software will append the zip+4 to your customer database. A list broker will search national databases for matching zip+4 neighbors. Areas with high saturation of customers within a zip code provide even better neighbor prospects. The neighbor method offers an uncomplicated approach to the complex and time consuming process of database modeling. A list of 10,000 customers can produce 40,000 targeted prospects.



Neighborhoods tend to have homes of similar size and style. The demographic profile of neighbors will be similar too!

## Meet A.M. Employees



**Sandy Wemstrom**  
Project Manager

The newest addition to the A.M. customer service team is Sandy Wemstrom. Her strong background in graphic design and printing has proven helpful to many of her print and mail customers. As a Project Manager she is able to help coordinate the printing, list services and mail production.

Sandy graduated from University of Wisconsin Stout with a BS in Art and Graphic Design. She worked as a catalog graphic designer for Nasco and then Highsmith in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. She joined an area printer and gained valuable experience selling, estimating, designing and providing customer service for printing customers.

Sandy has always called Janesville home. She lives there now with her husband, eight year old son, Joe and two four legged kids (a cat and dog) she calls Gizzmo and Norm. "My family is my heart and soul," says Sandy. She enjoys going up north for family vacations to fish, golf and swim. "I love the water and fresh air up there – it's always so peaceful," says Sandy. At home she likes cooking, music and a good scary movie.

What attracted Sandy to A.M. was the company's belief in family values. "I believe if you take care of your employees, they'll be more productive – that equals a great work environment," said Sandy. Her biggest challenge has been learning all the different aspects of the mailing industry. "I never imagined how intricate or involved direct mail could become," she said. Sandy tries to learn something new everyday so she can help customers achieve the most for their mailing dollars.

## First Shift team keeps inserting machines running through the day

Inkjet addressing, tabbing and inserting are some of the mail production services performed each day at A.M. Mailing. These first shift employees are inserting a #10 package on the Flowmaster 8 station inserter. Their team includes (L-R front) Cy Everly, Shirley Wentler, Colien Abernathy and (back) Tyson Trunkhill.



**Read more about direct mail marketing in A.M. Letterlink past issues.**  
Visit [www.ammailing.com](http://www.ammailing.com)



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**Inside:**  
**Your LetterLink Newsletter Vol. 9 No. 3**  
**from A.M. Mailing Services, Inc.**

**Mark your calendar for these print, mail and marketing events**

**August 9 – CADM ANNUAL MEETING**  
 Chicago, 410 Club, Chicago Association of Direct Marketing hosts the annual recognition luncheon of volunteers and presentation of new officers, call 312-849-CADM (2236) for details and registration.

**Sept 19 – WPPC PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY UPDATE**  
 Hartland, WI, learn about the recent updates to Quark, Adobe, and Apple software. Sponsored by the Wisconsin Publishers Production Club, Contact Marty Ochs at 608-838-9899 or visit [www.wppc.org](http://www.wppc.org) for more details.

**Sept 20 – NATIONAL PCC DAY 2006**  
 Dallas Fort Worth PCC is hosting the national day that is sponsored by the Postal Customer Councils, featuring key note speaker U.S. Postmaster General Jack Potter, plus roundtable discussions, educational sessions, rate case updates and the vendor exhibition hall. Remote sites participating in the live satellite broadcast will include the Lakeland District PCCs at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, WI and the Miami Dade County PCC. Go to [www.usps.com/nationalpcc](http://www.usps.com/nationalpcc) for details.

**Sept 20 – LAKELAND DISTRICT PCC DAY**  
 Visit A.M. Mailing Services booth at the Lambeau Field PCC Day featuring live remote broadcast and vendor expo hall. For details go to [www.usps.com/nationalpcc](http://www.usps.com/nationalpcc) or e-mail [info@ammailing.com](mailto:info@ammailing.com).

**Oct 14-19 – THE DMA ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**  
 San Francisco, Moscone Center, trade show and seminars sponsored

by the Direct Marketing Association, go to [www.dma06.org](http://www.dma06.org) for details and registration.

**Oct 15-18 – PRINT EXPO & CONVERTING EXPO '06**  
 Chicago, McCormick Place South, comprehensive prepress, printing, converting and mailing equipment trade show. Sponsored by NAPL, NPES and PIA, go to [www.gasc.org](http://www.gasc.org) for more details.

**Oct 22-24 – MAILCOM 2006 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
 Las Vegas, Riviera Royale Pavilion, the mailing industry's trade show and conference sponsored by the NPF, call 732-280-8805 to register.

**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](mailto:info@ammailing.com)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_



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