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USPS Backs Off Intelligent Mail Barcode Requirement

That's no reason you shouldn't be intelligent...

ProList, Inc. is an Industry Innovator in data management and direct mail services solutions.

At the same time they were announcing the latest proposed rate increase, the Postal Service casually mentioned that they were backing off the requirement that automated mail bear an Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) in order to qualify for a discount. You can relax for a while, and not worry about all of those reply mail pieces you were trying to get changed. The good ol' postnet barcode will continue to work. No new date was announced.

In the last few years the Postal Service has made a real effort at reverse alchemy, trying to transform gold into lead, taking a very promising Intelligent Mail program and doing all they could to bury it in a byzantine tangle of unmanageable regulations, excessively bureaucratic even by the Postal Service's rather high standards. We continue to see the value at the heart of Intelligent Mail, and will continue to offer our clients the opportunity to leverage that value in their mailings.

ProList has been using the IMb since the first day it became available in 2006, and we continue to use this improved barcode on virtually all of our mail. We still offer the capability to track your mail or get OneCode ACS data, the real value pieces of the Intelligent Mail program. So while we wait for the rest of the industry to catch up, we'll continue to sing the virtues of Intelligent Mail, whether its required or not!

Should Your Mail House Do Your Email Marketing For You?

You thought we'd say no?? Here's why!

Quality Service Guaranteed!

Fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly...and mailers... gotta mail stuff we suppose. But should mailers do email? That would be like combining fish and birds...say a roast capon with a crab sauce, all broiled to a nice golden brown...OK maybe we're stretching the analogy, but the bottom line is it can make a lot of sense to use the same folks who do your mail to manage your email marketing as well.

What do direct mail and email have in common? As it turns out, quite a bit:

- They both mail to a list that needs to be managed and segmented.
- They both involve design, proofing, and production.
- They both work best when personalized.
- They both drive the prospect to the same place...these days, a landing page.
- They are both harder to do than it first seems.

There is a lot more to email marketing than cc-ing 10,000 of your closest friends. Good email involves as much design as good direct mail, with a lot of deliverability and presentation twists you don't encounter with your direct mail. Still, too many marketers rely on largely self-service Email Service Providers (ESP) to create these critical communications. It is cheap, but you get what you pay for. You need some pretty sophisticated HTML coders and graphic artists on board to really get an email product that reflects your brand and gets the results you are looking for.

The same issues exist with list management – ESPs just aren't that good at it. Again, their systems are largely self-service, so unless you have top-notch database staff in-house, you may be missing unsubscribes and sending a lot of bounces to defective emails addresses that could have been easily fixed. List segmentation is critical when developing an email marketing plan; consumers expect email messages to be dynamically targeted to their history with your organization.

A properly done email marketing campaign also has a project management aspect to it. There are versions to review and approve, subject line testing that can be done, and many personalization options to be tested. A self-service ESP is not conducive to doing any of that...or to coordinating your email with your direct mail – a proven response builder for both media.

So, if you are serious about creating effective email efforts, and having an ongoing email program, you need an organization that can bring together sophisticated database management, HTML programming, and the project management to tie it all together. Oh, and make it all easy for you. I'll save you the suspense of trying to figure out who might bring all of those attributes together – it's your "mail house." At least it could be.

The definition of the mail house has changed a lot in the last few years, at least for those that are thriving. The sharp-eyed among you may have noticed that we went from being "ProList Data & Mail" to being "ProList Direct Marketing Services" last year. There's more to this name change than, well, a name change. We have expanded our services and become expert in a growing range of direct marketing services. We bring a tremendous knowledge of email marketing as well as the resources needed to manage a complex project, whether it is email, direct mail, or both. We are decidedly NOT self-service. We understand the complexity of any marketing campaign and can manage it for you. In the case of email, you end up with better delivery and open rates, timely processing, and a product that reflects your brand without requiring you to keep an army of programmers on staff. We can even time your email messages to deliver based on the delivery of your direct mail package!

So, next email campaign you have, consider letting the pros who handle your direct mail handle the "e" version as well. Give us a call to find out more about email marketing with ProList, and [click here](#) to learn about ProList's Multi-Triggered Email Marketing.

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