



July 24, 2012

Summertime Blues for USPS

“...I’d love to help you, son, but you’re too young to vote...”

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

Ah, the lazy days of summer. The mail stream is light, folks are on vacation, and congress is doing nothing. Of course the congress thing is not limited to summer. And this could be a problem.

You may have heard that USPS is in a bit of a tight spot, down a few billion dollars, and seemingly headed towards losing a few billion more. Fortunately, well known super hero, Congress Man, saw the organization in distress and swooped down to rescue it, using his Super Legislative powers. Now, thanks to Congress Man the future looks bright for the Postal Service.

I kid, of course. There is no Congress Man, just a bunch of congressmen (and women), and the only place they’re swooping is home to their districts to beg for votes. The Postal Service, clinging to its fingernails, is still waiting to be rescued.

It currently seems unlikely that there will be any action in the house before the lame duck session in December, and this is not good news for the mailing community. Without legislative relief, expect the Postal Service to move forward aggressively with network changes and facility closings in the coming months. With the fall mailing season approaching there could be significant service issues with mail delivery. Last fall we were concerned with the delivery we saw. This year add the regular fall mailing season to cost-driven network reductions and election mail volume and you could see some real service problems beginning in late August.

Our advice:

- Allow extra time for delivery, particularly for time-sensitive mail;
- Use commingling or drop shipment services which transports mail as deep into the system as possible;
- Track your mail, and pay attention to the tracking.
- For time sensitive projects, such as conference marketing, consider tying in other channels, such as triggered emails, to support your direct mail.

Postal delivery has always been a bit of an, umm, adventure, but the current postal and legislative environment promise some particularly challenging days ahead. Stick with ProList to know exactly what is happening, and how to best deal with it.

Is a Printer Doing Your Mailing? Why not? Your dentist does your surgery, right?

No disrespect. Printing is a complex highly demanding business, and I admire a good printer. Still, many printers are stepping into the mailing world without an understanding of many of the subtleties of mail. Our business is a little complicated, too.

There are two key areas where a good mailer brings a special expertise – data management and postal knowledge. Even a small misstep on either of these can hamper the effectiveness of your marketing efforts.

It’s easy enough these days to buy standardized mailing software, and this will get you a postal discount. But there is a lot that can be done to optimize your data that anyone less than a specialist may not be able to provide. Duplicate elimination (merge/purge) for example, is as much art as science. A mailing data specialist can work with you to set parameters exactly as you like.

Working with the Postal Service and having a deep understanding of postal regulations and processes is another area where few choose to tread. Mastering the complexities of Intelligent Mail will be essential in the coming years, and anyone who doesn’t spend significant time dealing with the mail (as we do at ProList) may not be able to secure you the best discounts and choose the best method of sending your mail.

We all stuff an envelope pretty much the same way. It’s all of the services, knowledge and support that that can make a difference. You don’t have a plumber fix your car, even though he’s got a tool belt. Make sure a mailer is handling your mail.

If you need to find a good mailer, you can call us at ProList – we’ll have a good suggestion!

To learn more about ProList on our website visit: <http://www.prolist.com>
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