



PROLIST
DIRECT MARKETING SERVICES

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The Brave New World for Postage Why you *will* track your mail in the future

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



Putting a direct mail project in the mail used to be kind of like buying chicken salad at the grocery store deli. The deli clerk puts a scoop of chicken salad in a container, puts the container on a scale, enters a code in the scale (the chicken's MID, I suppose), and the scale prints out a price sticker. You pay the cashier, go home and make a delicious sandwich. Yum!

Submitting a mailing was similar – a postal clerk weighs a few sample pieces of the mailing to determine an accurate piece weight, we put the mail on pallets and put the pallets on a scale. Within a pretty tight error tolerance the postal clerk determines that the correct amount of mail is there, makes sure it has been prepared correctly, and stamps the postal form we have submitted with a round stamp, certifying that the mailing has been prepared and submitted as claimed. We send you a copy, you pay our bill. Yum!

Except that there is no round stamp anymore. And no paperwork. Today we submit the certification electronically, which we can still print out, and has still been certified by a postal clerk – no more round stamp. Soon that will go away, too. Under Seamless Acceptance, a Postal Service program in pilot testing today, we will submit electronic documentation (edocs) into the USPS PostalOne! data platform (their exclamation mark, not ours) and truck the mail to an appropriate postal facility. No one weighs this mail – they just start processing it. The edocs “auto-finalize” in the USPS computer systems, and a receipt appears on the mailer dashboard behind the USPS Business Customer Gateway to Hell, not known to be one of the more, um...user-friendly sites on the web. Even if you can navigate to it, all the receipt is really telling you is that a successful edoc was submitted. It's up to you to know your mail is all in the system.

If we mail it at all.

Don't get us wrong – we mail every piece of mail our clients send us, but we don't always submit that mail directly to the USPS. These days, mailers use a wide array of alternative mailing methods – comingling, co-mailing, co-palletization and all of the other “co”s, as well as drop shipping through both logistics companies, through the USPS and probably other methods. A single mailing can be divided into multiple drop methods to minimize postage costs. And all of these operators will be operating with Seamless Acceptance, too. Even the most honest brokers can lose a skid of mail, or misroute it. It will soon become almost impossible to certify that all of your mail was inducted.

If you want to see a round stamp, go to a postal museum. If you want to know if your mail is in the mail stream, track it.

The bright spot in all of this is that mail tracking has gotten much better. The Postal Service scans a much higher percentage of mail these days, and through SnailWorks™, ProList offers a broad array of reports that can help you keep tabs on all of your mail – automatically. We can provide daily updates on how much is being delivered, each sent right to your (or your client's) email inbox. We can provide late mail alerts that let you know when mail is taking too long to be delivered – or is missing. There are many benefits to mail tracking, but perhaps the most fundamental is simply controlling all of your mail outlets.

It is important to note that you will need a partner to process your scan data – the raw data provided for “free” from the USPS is useless without a lot of complex processing. You **NEED** a mail tracking service provider. As luck would have it, SnailWorks is the best! While the US Postal Service will no longer tell you that all of your mail is in the system they will give you the tools, in coordination with SnailWorks, that will let you know.

Today, there is a windfall in that the USPS is offering an additional discount for submitting your mail using Full Service Intelligent Mail. For less than the amount of this discount, **ProList can offer you complete mail tracking!**

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