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Big Data and your Mailing List Some Stuff You Don't Know About Your List

Bummer. Everyone else gets to work with Big Data, and you're in direct mail. What fun is that? Don't you worry – direct mail has the Biggest Data. You just might not be using it. Let's fix that right now!

We're talking about your mailing list, of course. Right off the bat you know exactly where your prospects and customers live...ooooo, how intimate. And you know if they're in prison. What's that? You're not sure if they're in prison? You might want to check on that before you offer them a free casserole dish. How about if they went bankrupt last year? You're not sure about that either??

Do you even know if they still live there?? Maybe not.

The truth of the matter is it is difficult to keep up with people. They move a lot. Sometimes they don't tell the post office. Stuff happens – they go bankrupt, go to jail, or worse. None of these events tend to precipitate a change of address form. So we come back to Big Data.

Virtually all of our clients have us run their lists through NCOA (National Change Of Address) processing because, well, because the USPS says they have to do that much to get most postal discounts. That is the Minimum. It is a good thing to do, but there is so much more you should do at least a couple times a year, if not with every mailing.

We work with advanced services who use compiled data from a variety of data sources to create advanced suppression tools, and find people who have moved who do not appear in the NCOA database. Suppression options include:

- Deceased Individuals;
- Do Not Mail requestors (the DMA Mail Preference list);
- Prisons or other correctional facilities;
- Colleges;
- Nursing homes;
- Public housing;
- Bankruptcies.

You may want to consider if these groups make good prospects for you. Maybe if you sell files you don't want to suppress prisons. Who are we to judge?

These are all pre-mail processes that you use to improve your list before you mail to avoid wasting postage and printing on mailing to folks who are not really prospects. There are other pre-mailing processes such as PCOA (Proprietary Change of Address) that may also help improve your list. Again, you may not need to do these every time you mail, but you should check the quality of your list at least a couple of times a year. If you do not, unfortunately, you forfeit your authorization to complain about postage rates.

Not all solutions are appropriate for all users. You have house files, customer files, acquisition files. That's why you need to take full advantage of your mailing expert, ProList, to discuss what your best list strategies are, and how we can make your list more effective.

Postal News Because who doesn't want Postal News?

OK, maybe mail is passé, but it keeps making money for mailers, and they keep trying to change things at the USPS, so we try to keep up with it. Some highlights:

- The exigent rate case continues to simmer. Mailing fans everywhere know that the Postal Service tacked an extra 4.3% to their last rate case to cover an, um, exigency created by the Great Recession (we did not find it so great.) "Okey dokey", said the PRC (maybe not literally), "but you need to give back that increase once that recession thing is over." "Do not!" replied the Postal Service, who thereupon began holding their breath until they turn blue, or the courts allow them to keep their increase permanently. Complicating matters, the Postal Service has failed to lose much money in the past couple of months, so maybe their recession IS over. It is hard to imagine the Postal Service lowering their rates, and they don't have a plan as to how they would do it, but this could get interesting. The court may make a decision (which will be endlessly appealed) in the fall.
- Postal "reform" legislation is going nowhere. It almost seems like there's some kind of partisan politics involved or something. The less crisis-y the Postal Service is, the less likely anything will happen. Stay tuned.
- Keep an eye on your mail box. It may get moved. Or enlarged. Or get non-postal stuff put in it. The Postmaster General has to approve all mail boxes, and with their desires shifting to parcels, a bigger box looks mighty appealing, according to senior postal officials. They also are leaning more towards cluster boxes or curbside boxes, certainly for all new construction, and possibly redoing existing door to door delivery. Also, one postal reform bill in congress suggests allowing non-mail to be put in mail boxes on the days the USPS doesn't deliver. Take THAT, Saturday delivery eliminators! Seems unlikely, but everything congress does seems unlikely. Again, we encourage reading every issue of ProNews virtual cover to virtual cover so you will never be surprised.

ProList Keeps Growing! We're looking for someone to help our clients stay hip

On the topic of Great Recessions ending, ProList had its busiest month ever in April (OK, non-election month.) We are looking for a Manager of Client Relations to join the ProList team. This is a new position that will work with existing clients to keep them informed on new marketing trends and techniques, to make sure we're meeting all of their mailing needs, and just generally makes sure they're happy. All the job requires is a massive knowledge of direct mail and direct marketing, an obsession with customer service, and boundless energy. We'll provide the jokes.

Seriously. Sound interesting? Drop us a line at HR@prolist.com.

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