



October 25, 2012

Postal Rates to “Be Adjusted” January 27, 2013 Small but annoying increase submitted to PRC

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

The USPS sort of put forward proposed new rates for 2013. They definitely plan on raising the rate of a First-Class one-ounce letter to 46 cents from what is 45 cents today. Non-competitive categories such as First-Class Mail, Standard Mail, and Nonprofit mail are expected to increase postage an average of just under 3%. Some parcel rates may increase as much as 9%.

They have also proposed a First-Class Global Forever Stamp at a flat rate of \$1.10. This will allow customers to mail a letter (presumably under one ounce) anywhere in the world.

The sheer complexity of modern postal rates makes it more and more difficult to get a comprehensive look at all proposed rates at once. What used to fit on a single sheet is now literally hundreds of pages. A complete listing of all proposed rates was released October 24. [Click here](#) to review.

Of course the Postal Regulatory Commission still needs to approve these new rates before they can become official. This used to consist of a great deal of testimony, ritual dancing, and many law suits. Our best sources indicate that this time the PRC is simply working on issuing a ruling that effectively says: “Whatever.” Our feelings, too.

Stay tuned to ProNews for links to all of the rates as they become available.

USPS Goes Promotion-Happy 2013 happy offers from your Postal Service

The Postal Service released their proposed promotions calendar for 2013. In the past few years they have enjoyed offering summer sales. However, for 2013 they have released a schedule of six promotions that will unfold as the year progresses. It is certainly an eclectic mix of programs that shows a disturbing detachment from reality. Still, we dutifully report on them:

1) Direct Mail Mobile Coupon and Click-to-Call Promotion

This one runs in March and April, and is likely the most accessible to a wide variety of customers. In order to get the 2% discount offered, the mailer must either:

- Provide a mail piece that has both a physical discount coupon, and a link to a mobile version of the same offer. Or,
- Include a QR code or similar link on the mail piece that can be scanned by a mobile phone to automatically call a phone number.

If receiving inbound calls is part of your response model, you may want to consider this promotion.

The coupon option really only has value to retailers, not so much to fund raisers or membership organizations. The click-to-call provision could have value as long as you are equipped to handle the inbound calls, and the cost of calls will not exceed the value of the promotion – 2% off of your postage, which may be less if using a commingler.

2) Earned Value Reply Mail Program

This promotion runs April through June. On the surface it sounds pretty easy – for every piece of Business Reply or Courtesy Reply Mail (BRM and CRM respectively) you receive, that you sent out through the mail, you will get 2 cents. The problem is, the 2 cents is in the form of a credit to your permit imprint account for use on future mailings. If you don't have your own permit imprint account, you'll need to open one – which will require paying fees. And to use your credit, you will need to send future mailings through that permit imprint account. Not your mailer's permit, not your commingler's permit.

Given typical response rates, we do not think this has much appeal to fund raisers or direct marketers. Permit fees and nightmarish bureaucracy are likely to outstrip any credit you may receive. It may have value to utilities and banks sending out invoices. If you want to participate in this program, you will need to register your Mailer ID on the Postal Service's Business Customer Gateway (BCG), in the Incentive Programs Service. In this one case, the USPS specifically says that your MSP (Mail Service Provider – that's us) may NOT register for you – you're on your own. OK, we'll help, but it will be our little secret.

3) Emerging Technologies Promotion

This one runs in August and September. You may be eligible for a 2% postage discount. To get this discount, your mail piece must have either a Near-Field Communication (NFC) component (a NFC smart tag or RFID chip); an Augmented Reality component OR, an Authentication component.

If you have to ask what these technologies are, and how to use them, you will not be using them in August or September. A 2% postage discount will not factor into your decision to use them. Trust us on this.

4) Picture Permit Promotion

OK, this one seems interesting. Everyone likes pictures. Now you can put one right in the middle of your indicia – for free. The promotion runs August through September. After that, you'll pay 1 cent additional per First-Class piece, and 2 cents additional per Standard Mail piece.

The approval process is a masterpiece of red tape – USPS recommends beginning the Picture Permit registration and approval process at least SIX MONTHS prior to mailing. Even by USPS standards, it is an exercise in administrative torture. Interested? Seriously? If you're up for the challenge [click here](#) to read the requirements. If you're still up for the challenge, you'll need to get the approval process started no later than February 1, remember the sale starts August 1!

5) Product Samples Promotion

If you used to send product samples through Standard or Nonprofit mail, you probably stopped a few years ago when the postage rates for small parcels went up more than 100% in many cases. Now, for the months of August and September, you can get 5% of that back in the form of a postage discount. This is only for distribution of free samples. If you mail free samples, this seems fairly simple. Again, this is product samples only – **not front-end premiums.**

6) Mobile Buy-It-Now Promotion

The USPS wraps up the year with an expanded re-run of this year's 2 week Holiday Promotion. The mail piece must be selling a tangible product that can, and will, be shipped to the purchaser's address. The purchaser must be able to reach a mobile optimized site via a QR code, smart tag, or some other equivalent technology, and complete the transaction on their mobile device (although they are allowed to be billed).

Do this, and you will get a 2% discount. Again this is for selling merchandise only – **not fundraising, not memberships.**

The staff of ProNews apologizes for our less than enthused relaying of these promotions. While we appreciate that the Postal Service is trying to be creative and generate more business, as well as to keep the mail relevant by promoting new technologies, the onerous requirements decrease the value of these promotions to all but the largest mailers. Even for them, we think these are unlikely to change mailing behavior. If they happen to qualify, they'll claim the discount.

Still, we want our clients to know about all of the opportunities available to them. If any of these promotions appear appealing, we'll be happy to help you navigate the difficult waters you need to cross to claim them. It is worth noting that these are all currently proposals, and still need to be approved by the Postal Regulatory Commission. More details are bound to unfold. Read more about these promotions [here](#).

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