



# intelligent mail barcode *a closer look...*



**W**hat's in it for me? Don't we all ask that question every day about something? Here is another one to add to your list the Post Office's Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMB). Believe it or not, it has capabilities beyond making you ask "what is the deal with the up and down bars?".

The IMB can help marketers, database administrators, in bound departments, and the people that care about the dollars being spent on projects. The capabilities of the IMB go beyond a means of sortation for the Post Office.

From a marketing standpoint the IMB can be helpful because if used in conjunction with embedded tracking capabilities you can track the deliverability of your mail drop. As the pieces move through the Post Office and get scans at different locations you can receive web based reports about the progress and insight of expected delivery. Keep in mind not all Post Offices are equipped with barcode scanners, so mailing into Woodleaf, NC do not expect a scan there. Knowing mail is starting to arrive allows you to prepare for responses. Couple this with other parts of your

marketing mix and you can start to plan your campaigns in a very coordinated effort. For example, this would be very valuable insight if you are planning a Grand Opening, special sale for a retail location, or have an offer with deadline.

Keeping up with address changes can be difficult. PostMark has standardized on processing address changes over the last 48 months, rather than the standard 18 months. Since people are continually moving the IMB is a way to capture those address changes missed by National Change of Address processing. Properly done you can receive electronic notifications of changes directly from the Post Office. As a note, last year 1.6 billion pieces of mail were returned to sender and another 6 billion were discarded by the Post Office due to improper addressing. (DMNews 10/12/2009). Combining the front end NCOA work by PostMark and the use of the updating from IMB, you can minimize the potential of undeliverable mail and become more environmentally friendly in your marketing campaigns.

In situations where the target audience receiving your

mail is asked to call, email, or respond in a specific manner you can prepare properly by knowing when mail is being delivered. For Standard Rate and Non Profit mail the Post Office's guidance on delivery is 3 to 10 days. That leaves a broad window for planning and preparing. In certain situations staffing can be an issue for getting ready to receive calls or deal with responses.

When looking at money spent on projects, the IMB can be valuable as it can be utilized to coordinate marketing efforts, clean your data files (reducing pieces mailed, postage, printing, etc.), and allow for better planning on responses.

One other positive aspect is if you are seeing problems with delivery, the scan reports can be reviewed and problem areas can be pinpointed. Once those areas are identified, it is easier to guide Postal representatives in investigating issues and concerns.

PostMark is currently using the IMB. If you would like more information on the tracking aspects or the address correction program with the Post Office, please let us know.

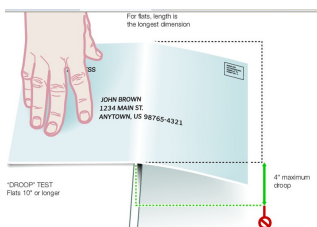
## Don't Let Your Mail be a Flop

**A**s the Post Office continues to improve processes and upgrade flat (mail that exceeds letter dimensions) sorting equipment, they are continuing an effort to standardize mail they accept. When mail fits their equipment and runs well they are able to provide savings and discounts to mailers and keep the rate of increases lower. The latest test the Post Office has designed is a deflection test also known more familiarly as the "droop test." This is not a new test, but one that was used several years ago and has now been implemented as of January 4, 2010.

The test measures the deflection of a flat size piece of mail that will be barcoded. The size of your mail piece determines the maximum "droop" it can have. For this test, flats are divided into two categories, those 10 inches or longer and less than 10 inches. The length is based on the longer edge of the flat. Below are depictions of two tests with the maximum allowable droop. If your piece does not pass these tests you will forfeit the barcode discounts.

### Pieces 10 inches or longer:

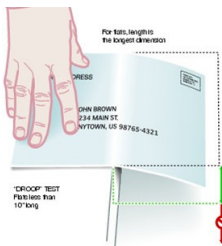
1) Place the piece with the length perpendicular to the edge of a flat surface and extend the piece 5 inches off the surface. Turn the piece around 180 degrees and repeat the process.



2) The piece is automation-compatible if it does not droop more than 4 inches vertically

### Pieces less than 10 inches long

1) Place the piece with the length perpendicular to the edge of a flat surface and extend the piece one-half of its length off the surface. Turn the piece around 180 degrees and repeat the process.



2) The piece is automation-compatible if it does not droop more than 1 inch less than the extended length. For example, a piece 8 inches long would extend 4 inches off a flat surface. It must not droop more than

3 inches vertically.

3) If your piece has a bound or folded edge (not an envelope) you will need to place the the folded or bound edge perpendicular to the edge of the flat surface.

Source: Domestic Mail Manual, www.pe.usps.gov

## 5 Tips and Ideas for Starting 2010 for Non Profits

**N**on profit organizations are heavy users of direct mail. Their efforts spread across many purposes and reasons for reaching out. Many non profits use regular newsletters to stay in touch with constituents as well as inform the community about progress of their efforts. Additionally, many organizations use the mail as a means to solicit support whether that is financial for a cause, general funding, or sponsorship. Below is a list of five tips that are not only good for those in the non profit area, but principles that can be adopted for other direct marketers.

- 1) Use direct mail to educate. Let recipients know about advances in helping the community, research, new programs, or upcoming events.
- 2) Stay away from alarmist fundraising. Using phrases such as someone will "die without your help" or "these people will starve to death, if you don't..." tends to appeal to someone's fear or guilt, but does little to create an endearment to your organization for long term giving.
- 3) Focus on the relationship and look at the lifetime value of the donor. With this, express appreciation for not only current giving, but past support. When donors feel important and appreciated they are more likely to continue giving and possibly giving more.
- 4) Let donors know how funds are being used. Show how fiscally responsible you are with the funds received and how they are being used. Donors are skeptical of organizations that tend to hide what is happening with finances.
- 5) Test and analyze. Review what is being done and test different approaches. Look at how you communicate with current donors and if anything can be done differently to enhance the relationship. If you are wanting to acquire new donors, think in terms of a non giver and what it would take or did take to convert you to a donor.

### Did you know?

Direct mail spending is expected to increase by \$1 billion in 2010 even with postage rates holding steady. A strong indication people believe in direct mail and its results. As an additional note: direct mail drove \$445.8 billion in sales in 2009 compared to \$26 billion by email. Source: Direct Marketing Association

### Getting Connected

#### Email Addresses for Postmark, Inc.

General email for lists – [GreatService@PostMark.ws](mailto:GreatService@PostMark.ws)

Rhonda Cathey, VP Operations  
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