

# BEYOND ROI LIES GROWTH

OPTIMIZE YOUR DIRECT MAIL ROI



DIGITAL PRINTING INSIDER | MAY 2017 | FOR TRANSACTIONAL, DIRECT MAIL, AND IN-PLANT PRINTERS

## OPTIMIZING POSTAL SAVINGS — WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

Direct mail is capable of generating response rates that are much higher than email. Targeted direct mail can generate awareness and sales leads, drive traffic to web sites, improve cash flow, or increase donations. But it does cost more than its digital alternatives, and often the postage cost can be greater than the cost of the mail piece itself. That's why taking the necessary steps to not only create a quality mail piece but also to deliver that mail piece at the lowest possible cost can improve a marketing campaign's return on investment and your growth and success as a competent service provider.

### Challenges

Today's direct mail and transactional mail service providers cope with a number of challenges. Customer-supplied data files for mailing projects come in all different formats and can vary from job to job. Today's

digital production inkjet presses enable marketers to vary the content on every mail piece to enable personalized, targeted messaging to segmented audiences — or even an audience of one! That's great for the marketer but does make handling and organizing mailing projects more complex. Without the right tools, service providers may find the data and mailing portions of the work very time consuming.

In addition to more complex and targeted campaigns, customers are also looking for tracking reports to know which pieces were delivered to which recipients and when they arrived. Direct mail providers know about applying Intelligent Mail barcodes (IMb) that enable mail piece tracking, but they may now know how to retrieve and interpret USPS® tracking data.

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In order to expand into the direct mail space, PCI Group invested in technologies that could match the demands associated with critical document delivery and the security of data. Feeling the inkjet revolution would redefine the industry, they jumped in with both feet.

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Lastly, USPS standards and processes are always changing. It takes time and resources to keep up with the electronic documentation, submission, and scheduling requirements needed to take advantage of USPS programs and discounts.

### Desired Solution

Direct mail providers can benefit from comprehensive and flexible tools that allow them to reformat and rearrange data, merge files together, eliminate duplicates, or break files into subsets. Accurate address standardization, move update processing, and presorting requires identification of postal address fields and extraction of the information necessary for postal processing. The best approach is to find the right software that can recognize different file formats, locate the necessary address data, and perform all the steps needed to qualify the mail for the lowest postage rates.

There are a number of tools available to make this possible. Let's take a look at some options.

### Mailing Software Solutions

Mailing software has been around for many years. It is designed to save time by eliminating manual sorting steps and save money by obtaining the lowest allowable postage rates. It automatically presorts the data prior to print production and produces all proper marking and postal reports. It also helps ensure that current postal requirements are being met.

Depending on your specific mailing requirements and volumes, there are a variety of solutions available.

#### Certifying

CASS™ software is certified software focused on data and address accuracy. CASS is the acronym for Coding Accuracy Support System, a USPS certification provided to software that cleans up, corrects, and standardizes a mailing list. It will add missing zip+4 codes, carrier route codes, Delivery Point Numbers, as well as correct any invalid address, city, state, or zip code information. As part of its address validation, the software will also employ the USPS LACSLink® dataset to convert rural route addresses to newer, city-style addresses and correct city-style addresses that have been renamed or renumbered. Some CASS-certified software may also give you access to NCOALink®, the National Change Of Address database from the USPS. In addition, many CASS solutions offer data cleansing as well as capabilities for omitting recipients who do not wish to receive promotional mailings by checking against the Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service, a file of 4.5 million people who do not want to receive promotional mail.

#### Presorting

Presort Accuracy Validation and Evaluation (PAVE) is mail presort software that has been certified by the USPS for accuracy in performing different types of sorts and producing various postal reporting documents. It sorts mailing lists according to all the rules and

## OPTIMIZING POSTAL SAVINGS (CONTINUED)

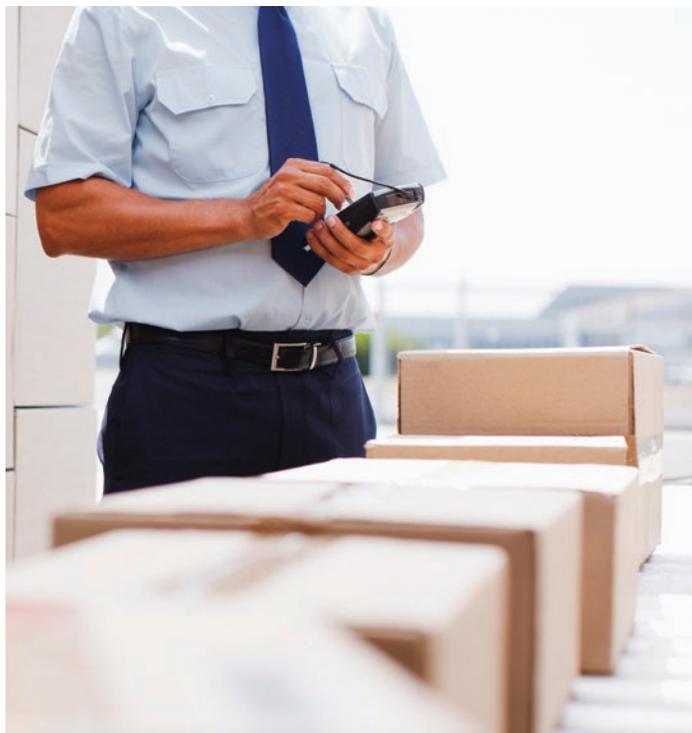
regulations of the USPS and produces barcoded mailing labels, barcoded tray and sack tags, qualification reports, postage statements, bundle and container reports, and instructions for packaging and preparing mail trays.

### Mail Preparation Software

This software combines address accuracy (CASS) and presort (PAVE) software into one package. These are usually entry-level software packages that come in different editions, for example, desktop, business, and professional, corresponding to varying production needs and price points.

### Mail Management Software

This is fully featured mailing software that includes all of the above features plus additional enhancements and tools to further automate and ensure mailings. One such feature is Track N Trace® support. Track N Trace is a service that uses the USPS IMb barcodes to enable full tracking and traceability for each piece of mail. Track N Trace collects step-by-step information from postal facilities on the piece's delivery path and stores it on a secure web service. The service offers reports that can help determine and gauge delivery effectiveness and performance. It is also available as a standalone service.



Mailing software is typically available as a subscription service for a specified period. This is because mail preparation requirements are changing constantly so software developers must continually update the software.

Determining which mailing software is best for your business requires research beyond just the price. Many software packages and features may appear similar. However, their standard capabilities, pricing model, upgrade paths, ease of use, and processing speed will vary. To ensure your software selection performs as expected and doesn't have a steep learning curve, take advantage of free trials and talk to customers that currently use the product. Find out the extent of training and customer support offered. Canon Solutions America can work with you to recommend solution partners that would best fit your requirements.

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