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## **Trends to Watch in 2009: Clear Mailing Ahead**

By Crystal Uppercue

Postal angst? Here are four mailing trends to watch.

### **Smart barcodes**

Although most people probably haven't noticed, more of their direct mail is sporting a clever and better barcode. It's called Intelligent Mail®, and its primary tool for tracking mail delivery and reducing the amount of undeliverable mail is the Intelligent Mail® Barcode. All bulk mailers who want to achieve the best automation discounts soon must switch to the new information-packed barcode, but forward-thinking mailers already are coding up. The benefit? Dollar savings, as fewer pieces of mail come back as "undeliverable."

But there's more. IMB lets mailers code and trace every piece of mail that enters the postal stream, down to the envelope. Services such as OneCode Address Correction Service are integrated, allowing the U.S. Postal Service to automatically inform mailers of address changes electronically. Good for the environment and the bottom line.

### **Being a co-pal**

Co-palletization combines trays of letter-size mailings onto the same shipping pallet — including trays of letter-size mail from different mailers. Once co-palletized, all the mail qualifies for Bulk Mail Center or Sectional Center Facility postal discounts.

Co-palletization cuts the Postal Service's handling and distribution costs, allowing it to charge less for mail entered at a BMC or SCF. Mailers who employ the strategy get the savings. Large mailers aren't the only beneficiaries of co-palletization, either. Much smaller mailers with as few as 5,000 pieces can achieve discounts for which they would not normally be eligible.

### **Going green**

Look for "green" printing and direct-mail production practices to gain strength in the months and years ahead. Because their relationship often is symbiotic, printing and direct-mail production companies have a responsibility to help marketing managers choose products that minimize the environmental footprint. Working with Forest Stewardship Council- and Sustainable Forestry Initiative®-certified production companies is just the start. (For more on FSC and SFI, see the story "3 Things You Absolutely Must Know About Paper This Year" in our

special report on direct mail in the January issue of *Fundraising Success* or by visiting [www.fundraisingsuccessmag.com/r?s=401590](http://www.fundraisingsuccessmag.com/r?s=401590).)

Other steps that reduce environmental damage and waste include frequently purging mailing lists, using variable data printing to effectively target direct-mail recipients and choosing lighter-weight paper stocks.

### **Getting more personal**

Direct mailers who find ways to personalize their communications, either through variable data printing, customized microsites (also known as personalized URLs or PURLs) or even simulated handwritten notes, continue to see better response. That's why the friendly, little sticky note will be a popular choice for those who want to capture attention and maximize results. For example, according to Post-it® Note manufacturer 3M, in one test Bell Atlantic reported a significant boost in response from mail pieces adorned with a Post-it® Note. Of 100,000 letters mailed, 10,000 featured the note, and that test group garnered an 18 percent increase in response over those who received the letter without the note.

Consider stickies to convey a tidbit of information (a URL, phone number, discount coupon) that can be saved long after the mail piece is tossed. Remember, too: Sticky notes can be personalized and printed in a variety of fonts that say, "Hey, check this out!"

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