



June 16, 2010

Getting Your Reply Mail Ready for 2011

A step by step guide

We have a love/hate relationship with Intelligent Mail at ProList. We love all of the value you can add to your mail using all of the advanced tracking capabilities enabled by the Intelligent Mail barcode. We hate the hundreds of pages of indecipherable regulations created by the Postal Service, which seem to serve as a dare to the mailing community to actually use Intelligent Mail. It is not for the faint of heart.

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



That said, there are elements of Intelligent Mail you need to embrace today in order to retain your postal discounts after May 2011. Beginning on May 16, 2011, the Postal Service will no longer accept mail with a Postnet™ barcode for automation discounts. You will need to use the Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMb) on your automation mail. For your outbound mail, this is a piece of cake because ProList will do it for you. We've been using the IMb on mail for nearly four years. It will be automatic. (more on that as May 2011 approaches-)

However, in order to get automation discounts on your outbound mail, any inbound mail included – business reply mail or courtesy reply mail – in the mailing will also need to be automation compatible, and will need an IMb. It's a delightful little gotcha'-embedded in the Domestic Mail Manual. Of course many of our clients order reply envelopes in bulk months in advance, so even though the requirement doesn't kick in until next year, you really need to begin planning for your reply mail now. In order to create an inbound IMb you will need to have your own mailer ID as well as appropriate artwork created for your reply mail.

Quality Service Guaranteed!



Getting a Mailer ID (MID)

Getting an MID involves an online application process with the Postal Service. It is not difficult and only takes about ten minutes, but the site is not particularly intuitive to navigate. To get started [click here](#) after you read the rest of our little guide here.

This will place you in the dreaded USPS Business Customer Gateway. The first thing you will need to do is register as a new user. You can do this by clicking the "Sign Up" button in the Login panel. From there, just follow the prompts. There are a number of tricky places to navigate, so if you have questions, or would like us to walk through the process with you, just give us a call.

A couple of points about the MID you need for your reply mail:

- If you already have an MID, you can use it for your reply mail, too.
- You are allowed to have more than one MID, so if you are not sure if you already have one, don't worry about getting another one for reply mail.
- Even if you have multiple locations, it's OK to use one MID for all of your reply mail.
- After you have created your MID for reply mail you can still use ours for outbound mail, and we prefer that you do.

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Creating the your inbound IMb

We're not done with acronyms yet. Getting your MID was just your first step in making your reply mail Intelligent Mail compatible. The MID is just one component of the Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) that you will need on your new reply mail pieces. Other components include: a Service Type Identifier (STID), a three digit code that tells the barcode sorter what class and type of mail you have and what services you have requested; a serial number that can uniquely identify a mail piece (but will generally be all zeros for preprinted reply mail); the ZIP+4 for the reply address (nine digits, unless a delivery point is added – don't ask); finally, a barcode identifier, just for the sake of adding two more digits, and always "00" on reply mail.

There are more rules than you want to read about here, and they vary based on whether it is Courtesy Reply or Business Reply and the mail piece classification. Don't be discouraged, we'll make it easy for you – send us a current reply envelope and your MID and we will create the correct IMb for you. We'll also forward it to a USPS Mailpiece Design Analyst and have official artwork created for you.

If you really feel a need to know first hand the rules for Intelligent Mail, you can get the entire 162 page guide directly from USPS [click here](#).

Time Frames and Help

You can begin to use the IMb on your inbound mail now, but it is not required until May 2011. The best course for you to follow in getting ready is to let us walk you through the process. It's what we do every day, and there are a lot of opportunities for mistakes. We'll make it easy and accurate for you, and you can use the reply envelopes we create with any vendor, even, heaven forbid, someone other than ProList. Even if you are not currently a ProList client we can help you. Call us to set up an appointment with an Intelligent Mail specialist

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