



April 25 2017

Informed Delivery Rolls Out Nationwide

Stand by for the PR blitz

Like it or not, Informed Delivery (ID) is here. The Postal Service moved from pilot to national roll out in a matter of a few months, despite reservations from many direct mailers. After the National Postal Forum in May, expect to see TV commercials, direct mail, and a blitz of marketing for the new service. This WILL impact your direct mail marketing.

For those of you who have not been reading along in your program, Informed Delivery is a program that distributes images of today's postal mail to the email addresses of enrolled consumers. Every morning(ish) subscribers get an email providing black and white images of the letter-size mail pieces that were sorted for delivery to a particular address for that day. It's handy when you're traveling, or when you just want to know if you need to bother to go to the mailbox today.

Mailers do have the option of augmenting the black and white image with a clickable color ad, and mailers of flat-size mail can provide an image of their mail piece for the USPS to include in their ID emails.

Consumer participation is microscopic so far, as the program was an un-promoted pilot. It was originally piloted in Northern Virginia, where most participants were Postal employees, and the pilot was then expanded to the New York City area, where approximately 1% of the households were enrolled. According to Postal Service surveys, consumers loved getting these notices, and marketers enjoyed measurably better response rates where their prospect had seen the image before.

The program is laden with issues regarding privacy, impact on marketing, and technology. Nonetheless, USPS is moving forward at, what for them, is a lightning pace. Some of the issues:

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- **Privacy.** Postal mail is delivered to households – email notices are sent to individuals. If a spouse or kid hoped to grab something out of the mailbox before Mom, Dad, or spouse saw it – sorry. Credit card bills, letters from your lawyer, doctor's bills – anyone signed up can see it all – even after they move out if they don't file a change of address. Need we mention HIPPA?
- **Privacy, part 2.** USPS has begun talking about a new program, Intelligent Address, where they brag they can take an email address and send them postal mail. Where do they get this linkage? They don't say, but we presume signing up for ID is one source – they have your street address and email address there. Eww.
- **Untested marketing impact.** Just what impact will ID have on response rates? Will folks mentally triage their mail on their smart phones and decide what to care about and what to trash before they even see the real mail? Will they simply not go to their mailbox unless there is something tantalizing, and sort through a week's worth of mail instead of a day's? No one really knows – this is all untested. In some way it helps keep mail relevant, but it could do harm, too. I guess we'll see.
- **System management issues.** If it catches on in a big way, this program will require a ton of data management and distribution. If it's a hit, this could be a major burden on USPS systems. We already see ID emails going out hours late some days – will the public call to find out where it is? Giant data has not been a sweet spot for USPS. This program is huge data.
- **Participation challenges for mailers.** OK, you are on the ID bus, and you want to participate! You want your clickable color ads to appear. You want images to appear for your flat mail. Well, participating is kind of one-off and manual so far. They have written some functionality into mail.dat (whee!!), but it doesn't really do anything yet. It's free (for now) and there are very few rules. So it is indeed rolling out, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

What you need to do:

- **Add ID into your strategic thinking.** Assume that this program will have some impact on you and your competitors. How can you leverage this to maintain your market position.
- **Sign up now to begin receiving ID notices** as a postal consumer, [click here](#) to sign up.
- **Design with ID in mind.** Some of your prospects will be seeing your mail piece as a 3/4" x 1.5" image on their smart phone. Consider including a large URL or PURL on the address side of the mail piece. Add a compelling message or teaser there, so they will want to take a look at your piece when they do go through the actual mail.
- **Add the ID variable to your testing.** Test designs with prominent address side messaging against plain pieces. Measure what works.
- **Look into having ads appear in the ID email.** It's free! This may be the final free marketing channel. Talk with us at ProList on how you can participate.
- If you mail flats, **provide images** so they will appear in ID emails.
- **Finally, stay, well...informed.** This program is likely to have a significant impact in the coming year or two. The big question, or one of the big questions, is how

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many consumers will sign up? That will ultimately drive the rest of the program.

Let ProList guide you through this important and complicated new challenge. We'll keep you up to date on the latest on Informed Delivery.

ProList – Out and About

Attending the **MM&C Conference** this year? Be sure to stop by and say "hello." ProList is exhibiting at Booth 609 in the Expo Hall on Tuesday May 2 and Wednesday May 3, 2017.

MM&C is THE place to be for marketing, membership and communications professionals. This year's theme is "Going Viral," and we're ready to connect and be inspired! Need to make an appointment with us at the event? Email Jeff Thomas, VP of Sales & Business Development, at jthomas@prolist.com or Sylvia Taylor, Director of Marketing & Client Relations at staylor@prolist.com and we'll reserve a time!

Heading to Philly instead? We'll also be at **The Benny's (The Benjamin Franklin Awards for Marketing Excellence)** on Thursday, May 4 too!

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