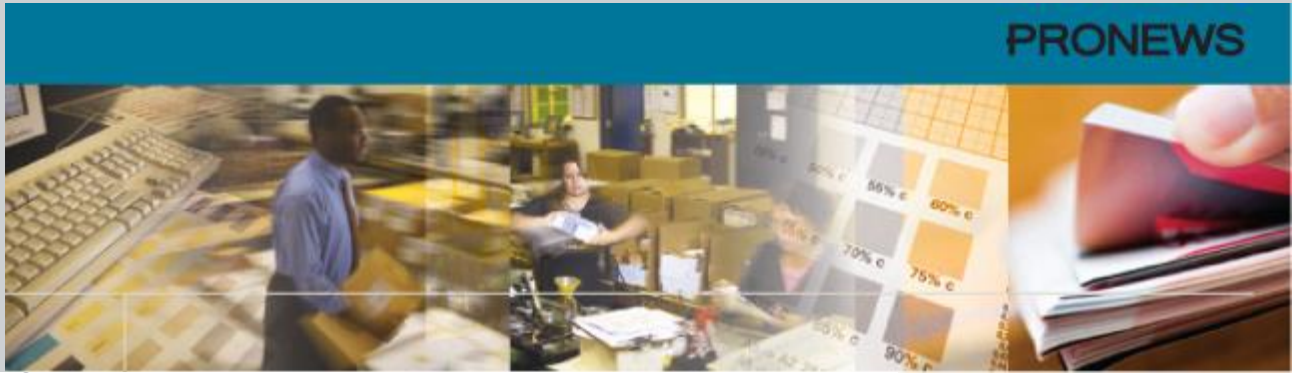


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March 2018

NCOA, Move Update, and Scorecards

Trying to make sense out of chaos

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



Dag nab it, the Postal Service *hates* forwarding mail. They have hated it since the mid-90's when they created the whole move-update regime. It costs them something like a billion dollars a year. In the roaring (in hindsight) 90's, they insisted you do something to make your list better. You should NCOA before mailing, ACS during mailing, AEC between mailings, and brush your teeth after every meal. The funny thing is, in spite of all of this, UAA mail (Undeliverable As Addressed) has remained about the same.

But this time they mean business.

Starting this month (March 2018) they are looking at every piece of undeliverable mail, identifying it with that pesky little barcode (the IMb) and setting a very low threshold for acceptable errors - .5%. Yes, one half of one percent, for you verbal folks. If you exceed that threshold with your reckless, sloppy mail, you will pay eight cents for each piece above the threshold. So there! Well, actually, you don't pay it - the eDoc submitter does. That's us. And we gotta collect it from you. The first bill arrives April 11. Via email of course. Whee.

Quality Service Guaranteed!



So, from where do these UAA blues arise, anyway? We run almost every mailing against the Postal Service's own NCOA database, and identify pieces that are undeliverable - that should fix it, right? Not quite. The NCOA database is not perfect. It can be a little out of date - within regulation, but not up-to-the-minute - and may not have some really old moves on it. It also falsely identifies some moves. Maybe an individual moved out and it shows as the whole family. These are small numbers, but it is now a small threshold.

Some of our clients insist we mail to an address, even if it shows up as incorrect in NCOA. This makes us a little nuts, but we do get it. Some “undeliverable” addresses really are deliverable - maybe as many as 40%. So, you know your ROI - maybe it’s worth it. Here’s the thing - when we deliberately mail a piece at a discounted rate that we know came up as undeliverable, our overall quality rating with the Postal Service goes down on our Mailer’s Scorecard. Oh yes, we have one. So, for us there is more than eight cents at stake. Nothing personal, but we don’t want to mail your questionable addresses.

Contact Us Today!

Dave Lewis
dlewis@prolist.com
301 924-4545
www.ProList.com



But there is a solution. If you wish to mail your NCOA rejects, we can mail them at full rate First-Class Mail rates. They are very good sports at USPS when you mail full rate. Move Update rules only apply to discounted mail. Of course, you will pay a postage premium, and we need to add a processing charge for adding essentially another split. We can even add ACS service, and would strongly urge that, so that we can find out what pieces were actually delivered. And remove the bad ones from your list.

Of course, there are lots more we can do to help with your address quality, and lots you can do. But we’re not going to get preachy here. Just know that bad addresses come with a cost.

Congress to the Rescue?

Postal reform makes a new appearance in the Senate. This has a new relevance today, given the new rate setting process introduced by the Postal Regulatory Commission, which could raise rates 40% over the next five years. If enacted, this reform bill could undo the PRC’s proposal, or at least make them take it back to the drawing table.

The *Postal Reform Act of 2018* was introduced by Tom Carper of Delaware. It’s a longer, more complex bill at 165 pages that resolves a lot of prefunding issues, as well as protecting community post offices, allows shipping of beer, wine, and spirits by mail, and myriad other details. It does reinstate, permanently, 50 percent of the “exigent” surcharge, which would result in an immediate postage increase of 2.15%, which suddenly seems kind of quaint.

- There is not a companion bill in the House yet, and Congress is not exactly a dynamo of bill passing these days, but this does at least offer some hope for relief from the scary PRC proposal. Stay tuned!

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4510 Buckeystown Pike, Suite M
Frederick, MD 21704

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4510 Buckeystown Pike Suite M | Frederick, MD 21704-7537
1-888-PROLIST | Fax 301-924-2373 | www.ProList.com