

Subscription renewal notices...a cloudy future

Many publishers of Periodicals rate publications utilize pre-addressed, enveloped subscription renewal notices, polybagged along with the magazine, as a method to reduce the costs of mailing these notices. Historically, these notices if mailed by themselves were subject to First-class postage if they contained information specific to the subscriber, such as the subscription expiration date, subscription price, etc. Postal regulations allow publishers to mail these types of pieces, currently known as incidental First-class enclosures, polybagged with the magazine and pay Periodicals rates on the renewal notices. The postage is charged on the additional weight and ad content (these are considered 100% advertising if the magazine contains advertising) of the notices and the envelopes.

This practice is now being called into question, however, based on a USPS Customer Support

Ruling (PS-238) issued in December 2004. The ruling describes a subscription renewal notice with subscriber specific information, and the ruling indicates that the renewal notice qualifies for Standard mail and not First-class. This is good news for publishers who mail these renewal notices by themselves, since First-class postage is more expensive than Standard postage. However, since these types of pieces have now been ruled as Standard class mail and not First-class, how will that effect the postage payment on these pieces when they are polybagged with Periodicals rate publications? Will publishers continue to be allowed to mail these at Periodicals rates, or will they now be subject to the ride-along or Standard enclosure rates?

Stay tuned as this interesting turn of events develops.

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Bulk shipping option

If you are currently shipping magazines or catalogs in bulk quantities, either from the printing plant or from your offices, there is a new service available from the USPS that may save you some money. The USPS now offers a flat rate Priority Mail box in two different sizes. The postage rate is a flat \$7.70 per box, regardless of the weight and regardless of the destination (domestic only).

The boxes come in two sizes:

1) 11.25" x 8.75," 6" deep. This box can accommodate most standard size publications and could hold approximately 15-20 lbs.

2) 14" x 12," 3.5" deep. This box could accommodate some tabloid size publications and could also hold approximately 15-20 lbs.

Priority Mail is a 2-3 day delivery service, so it

is comparable to UPS or FedEx 2 or 3 day services. However, it is much less expensive than the published rates for UPS or FedEx 2 or 3 day services for 15-20 lb. shipments. The drawback is that there are no automatic tracking services like there are for UPS or FedEx. However, delivery confirmation is available for an additional charge of \$.45 per package.

Postage for these packages may be paid by stamps, meter strips, permit imprint (indicia) or online (www.usps.com) with a credit card.

If you are interested in this shipping option for your bulk shipments from your offices, contact your local USPS account rep. If you are interested in this option for shipments from the printing plant, please contact your plant distribution manager or client services representative.

Banta Publications Group Distribution Contacts

As a customer, you are encouraged to direct all of your communications to your plant Account Manager. However, there may be occasions when you may need to contact someone in the distribution areas directly. To facilitate this, the following is a list of contacts:

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Twelve step program for cutting costs

Publishers and catalogers are always looking for ways to trim costs, and since distribution is such a large portion of the total costs, we'd like to offer this twelve-step program to help you reduce your costs:

1) Scrub your mailing list. Outdated or incorrect addresses in your mailing list cost you money, and virtually every mailing list has them. One of the best ways to maintain a clean mailing list is to insure that the data is input correctly from the start. Consider investing in database software that will allow you to verify addresses as they are input. This type of software makes address corrections in real time, and prompts inputters to ask for additional information, such as apartment numbers, suite numbers, directionals, etc. The up-front cost of this software can pay for itself easily, not only in reduced mailing costs, but in improved customer service for your clients. There are also a number of address hygiene services available, such as NCOA or ACS, that can help clean up your mailing lists. Contact your Banta Distribution Services (BDS) CSR or your list processor for more details.

2) Evaluate your mailing list. Aside from making sure your subscriber or client files are up to date, take a look at your prospecting lists. Make sure you are mailing to the correct people, and to recipients that will offer the greatest response. Evaluate how and when you mail to these prospect lists. If you use rental lists, code the names so that you can track the effectiveness of the lists. Ask for the National Deliverability Index (NDI) score on the rental list to insure that the list is accurate, up-to-date, and deliverable. Negotiate terms that allow you to pay only for the names you use and that are deliverable.

3) Design your mailpiece. Unfortunately, many designers do not take into account the ramifications of postal regulations. Design decisions on virtually every component of the mailpiece, e.g. covers, cover wraps, cover tips, inserts, reply cards, order forms, supplements, ride-alongs, etc. can cost you big time if they do not meet postal requirements. There are also multiple options in

many cases, some of which can save you lots of money. It is best early on in the design stages to have a mock-up reviewed by a USPS Mailpiece Design Analyst, or contact your plant CSR for a review.

4) Process your mailing list. Make sure that your list processing vendor is using current CASS and PAVE certified software to process your mailing lists. Postal presort software offers lots of parameter choices when processing the mailing list. If your vendor utilizes the default parameters without analyzing the effects of the optional parameters, you could be paying additional postage, additional bindery mailing costs, or sacrificing delivery time. If your mailing list is processed by BDS, we have done this analysis for you, and utilize the parameters that optimize the postage savings, delivery, and bindery efficiencies. If your mailing list is not processed by BDS, contact Sam Mason at smason@banta.com to arrange for an analysis. You need not be a current Banta print client to use BDS for processing your mailing list.

5) Evaluate your mailing versions. Make sure to analyze the costs of splitting your mailing list apart for multiple versions. Versions are used for a multitude of reasons, but do you really understand the true costs of splitting your list apart for those versions? If you are not utilizing selective binding, and the versions are not geographic in nature, these splits can negatively affect your postal presort, which impacts your postal discounts and ability to drop ship. There are also usually additional charges both for list processing and in the bindery for multiple mail list splits. One example that we commonly see is the comp or advertiser list broken out as a separate version during list processing, even though these names receive the same mailing version and mail via the same method as other names on the mailing list. Often this is done as a method of keeping track of these counts, or with the idea that if they are broken out they will get better delivery. Actually just the opposite is true: by breaking out these small quantities separately, most of the mail ends up in ADC or Mixed ADC sacks, which undergo the

most postal processing and transportation and thus take the longest for delivery. There are other ways to track these counts, so unless these names receive a different version or mail via a different method, it is best to combine them with the rest of the mailing list.

6) Combined mailings. Consider combining multiple mailpieces into a single mailpiece. For example, you can include subscription renewal notices in a polybag with your publication. Separate publications can be polybagged together for mailing, or even subsequent issues of the same publication (e.g. back-issue mailings, special issues with regular issues). The Periodicals ride-along rate offers lots of opportunities for start-up publications, advertising pieces, or other promotional items to be included with the publication. Periodicals publications can be formatted in multiple parts polybagged together, or supplements can be included with the publication. These options can not only be cost savers, but can also be additional revenue streams. As always, we recommend that you review any of these items prior to production with your plant CSR for both manufacturing and postal compliance.

7) Use PostalOne! (formerly called CAPS) for postage payment. This program allows you to pay all of your postage for mailings at all locations from one single postage account. This reduces the administration time and effort of tracking multiple postage accounts, eliminates expedited shipping of postage checks (and potential delayed mailings), and improves the “float” on your funds. Using the debit option allows you to keep your postage money in an interest bearing account. A side benefit is the ability to access your postage account information, including all transactions, via the internet at any time. For more information, log on to <http://www.usps.com/postalone/>.

8) Analyze your back-issue mailings. This is a balancing act between servicing your clients and saving money. The more names that can be combined into a single back-issue mailing, the more cost effective it is, both from a manufacturing and postal standpoint. However, waiting too long to gather these names can affect your customer service. Each publication is different, so only the publisher can determine what is the correct balance. There are creative ways to mail these back issues (*see step 6*), or you may elect to offer digital back issues rather than hard copy back is-

ues. Banta’s PubNet can assist you with creating these digital issues. Contact Wayne Metcalfe at wmetcalfe@banta.com.

9) Analyze your international mail. Are you mailing your international copies at the best rates? In addition to the USPS, there are a number of re-mailers that can offer better rates and/or delivery times. Reducing your costs here can help you expand more into international markets. For a rate comparison, contact your plant or BDS CSR. As in step 8, digital issues may be a cost-saving alternative to hard copy international distribution. Contact Wayne Metcalfe for more details.

10) Analyze your shipping options. The best way to do this is to determine what you are shipping, how much it weighs, where it is going, and when does it need to get there. The last element is key because many times publishers pay for expedited shipping when it really isn’t necessary. Carriers also now offer differing levels of expedited shipping. You can choose from next day, two day or three day delivery for example. For an analysis of your shipping costs, contact the plant distribution manager, or your plant CSR.

11) Drop ship your mail. Drop shipping your mail to additional postal entry points can reduce your postage. Drop ship discounts for Periodicals mail are dependent on the weight per copy, advertising percentage, and number of palletized copies. Drop ship discounts are more lucrative for Standard and especially Package Services mail. If your mailing list is processed by BDS, or your list provider supplies mail.dat files with your mailing list, your mailings are already analyzed each issue for potential drop ship savings. If not, contact your list provider and request a mail.dat file to be sent to the printing plant along with your mailing list (check first to see if there are additional charges for them to do this).

12) Prepare for new mailing options such as co-mailing and co-palletization. Banta plans to offer these services in 2005. Co-palletization will most likely require filing for an additional entry point at a centralized location, which will be used to enter mail currently in sacks (Periodicals rates only). Both co-mailing and co-palletization will require participation in PostalOne! (see item 7). Not all publications will be able to save money using these processes; each must be analyzed individually. We will keep you posted as these projects progress.

Banta PubNet Design

This issue was designed and assembled by Banta PubNet. If you are currently outsourcing the design of your publication, you might want to investigate Banta’s design and assembly capabilities. Banta’s creative team has the experience it takes to design outstanding publications from scratch, or work with your existing templates. We can also convert your native layout documents to PDF for streamlined computer-to-plate workflow as well as provide custom designed graphics and layouts for your magazine. For more information, contact Wayne Metcalfe at 816-792-6394, or make an e-mail inquiry to wmetcalfe@banta.com.

For additional copies of the *Banta Mailbox*, log on to www.bds.banta.com or contact Jennifer Fitzpatrick, Marketing Communications Manager at 630-575-2049 or at jfitzpatrick@banta.com

Banta Mailbox is a monthly publication produced by the Banta Publications Group. Any comments or questions are welcome. Please contact Monica Lundquist of the Banta Publications Group by phone at 816-792-6370, by e-mail at mlundquist@banta.com, or write to Banta Publications Group, Mailing & Distribution Services, 3401 Heartland Drive, Liberty, MO 64068-3378.

Point, click and search!

As you may be aware, current and past issues of the *Banta Mailbox* are available on our Web site as .pdf files. The files may be viewed with Adobe Acrobat Reader or similar software. We have recently enhanced the site so that you can do a word search on these issues of *Banta Mailbox*. If you would like to reference a past article, you can type in some key words from the article to pull up

the file for viewing. If you are interested in a particular subject matter, ride-alongs for example, you can type in the words “ride along” to get a listing of all the issues with articles pertaining to ride-alongs.

We hope you find this resource helpful. Check it out by logging on to www.bds.banta.com and click on *Banta Mailbox*.

Online Information

More information on Banta Corporation is available through the company's World Wide Web site at

www.banta.com

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