SNAILWORKS™
Direct Mail Insights & Solutions

The Postal Service Brings Digital to Mail

Informed Delivery®
– A New Marketing
Channel Comes of Age

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There are very few channels for touching your prospects effectively and virtually for free. Informed Delivery is one of them. Today it reaches nearly 64 million subscribers – every day. Subscribers who want to know what you have waiting for them in their mailbox!

So, let's discuss what Informed Delivery is, how it works, and how to leverage it to improve your postal mail.

What is Informed Delivery?

Launched by the Postal Service in 2017, Informed Delivery (ID) is a program that sends consumers images of the mail they will be receiving that day. The consumer signs up on the USPS web site, providing proof of identity, their home address, and an email address. Once registered, each morning the consumer will receive an email from USPS that provides a black and white image of each mail piece that is expected in their mailbox that day. They can also log into a USPS online portal to see their mail. The images they see are captured from barcode sorting equipment at the Postal Service.

As of May 2024, there are approximately 64 million subscribers registered to the system, representing about 35% of the US households. The Postal Service continues to actively market the service and continues to add close to a million new subscribers every month. Of these registered users, most receive a daily email, while a few may view their mail through their USPS online account. Tens of millions of consumers are seeing their mail first each day through Informed Delivery – For most mailings the typical subscriber level is 30% – 35% of pieces mailed, and of those, more than 60% of the email recipients are opening the ID email.

The system is not perfect. Some equipment does not capture images, particularly flats sorting equipment, and some mail may bypass automation and an image may not be provided. Still, consumers love the program – Postal Service surveys show a very high satisfaction rate.

Essentially, this is a whole new marketing channel – a daily email service to nearly 55 million subscribers, most of whom actively read it – every day. And you can run an ad in there – for free!

SPRING 2024

45.4 million households registered in the system

31.5% of eligible US households are registered users

55 million individuals receive a daily email, while the rest view their mail through the portal or app

1,000,000 million new registered users each month!

Putting Informed Delivery to Work for the Mailing Industry

The Postal Service allows mailers to replace the black and white image with a full-color image, and ads that link to a web page. This gives marketers an additional "touch" with their prospects and customers, boosting response and providing a new response path through a clickable "ride-along" ad. Mailers can use Informed Delivery to convert a mail piece to an Informed Delivery campaign.

The Elements of an Informed Delivery Campaign

It's all built around the mail piece. The objective of an ID campaign is to boost direct mail response. Here's what goes into a campaign:

- The original mail piece
- The representative Image
- The ride-along ad
- Web link
- The web landing page
- Reporting

The Original Mail Piece

One nice thing about adding an ID campaign to a mailing is that there are no changes required to the mail piece. No special barcodes or instructions – just the same effective mailings that have been bringing you success.

The Representative Image

The representative image is a color image that a mailer uploads to USPS that replaces the black and white image that would normally appear in the ID preview the consumer receives. It does not have to be an exact image of the mail piece, but it must represent either the front or the back of the mail piece. Generally, the representative image should look like a piece of mail – this helps relate the image better to the actual mail piece in the consumer's mind.

The representative image is a static image. It is not clickable – it is a simple JPEG. Art specifications follow at the end of this paper.

Providing a representative image is optional for letter mail. You may allow the grayscale image to appear in the ID ad, with just a ride-along below it. Both configurations have performed very well in terms of click-through rates in Postal testing.

The Ride-Along Ad

The ride-along ad is a smaller clickable image that accompanies the black & white mail piece image, or its representative image. The ride-along is connected to a web URL that can take prospects directly to the offer – either through a web landing page, or the company web site.

The ride-along is not optional. It must be included as part of an ID campaign. The ride-along must have a prominent call to action – "Click Here", "Donate Now", "Learn More," are some examples of calls to action. Simply displaying a logo is not adequate.

Like the representative image, the ride-along is a jpeg image.

The Web Landing Page

While a general company site is permissible, it is more effective to create a web destination specific to a campaign, a web landing page. This is a web page designed specifically to host the offer presented in the mailing. In most cases, the general web site makes it difficult to locate and reply to a specific offer – a landing page brings the offer front and center. Branding theme should generally match the ID images and the mail piece.

Web Links

The ride-along ad that appears in ID campaigns needs a link behind it – a URL. The URL must be secure (https), and direct clickers to a web site – either a campaign-specific landing page, or a general company web site. Currently, only one URL can be used in a campaign, but the ID system can append parts of the IMb to direct clickers to a unique web page – essentially acting as a PURL.

Representative Image

Original Mail Piece

The Ride-Along Ad

Postal Reporting:

- Post-Campaign Summary reporting from USPS: The ID program will share how many ID emails were delivered for the campaign, how many of them were opened, and how many ride-along ads were clicked.

- Post-Campaign Detail reporting from USPS: The ID program will also provide a detailed breakdown of whom in a campaign is an ID subscriber, if they opened the email, clicked, when they did, and how many times they did. This is reported only by IMb MID and serial number, so the mailer needs to marry results back to the original mailing file to get useful contact specific data.

Campaign reporting may be obtained from the USPS through IV mail tracking data feeds or by logging into the Business Customer Gateway. The raw data generally requires a great deal of processing to be usable.

Web Reporting after campaign

You can also track web page activity outside the USPS campaign system to evaluate the results of a campaign:

- Landing page activity: Each ride-along ad will have a unique URL that should lead to a unique landing page. This can be used to measure click-throughs per ad. If you provide unique URLs for each ad, you can compare click-through rates.

- Conversions: If you have a buy button, or other call to action on your landing page, you can measure conversion rates verses landing page visits.

Assembling an Informed Delivery Campaign

The campaign creation process for ID is relatively simple, but there are a number of steps involved, to make it as effective and measurable as possible.

- **Create the mail piece.** As stated above, the mail piece needn't be changed at all for the sake of ID. You do need, though, to be sure you have a clear offer or objective, as with any good direct mail.

- **Create the ID image – or images.** Decide what strategy you want to follow, and create the appropriate images. You may want to just do a ride–along ad, to give your prospects an additional avenue of response. Or you may want to also replace the mail piece image with a color image – the representative image. This can be effective for branding, or for campaigns where there is no associated web offer. In most cases, you will probably want both. Either way, you will need to create JPEG images.

- **Create the campaign in the USPS ID system.** This is done in the USPS Business Customer Gateway. You will need to supply some basic information – a campaign name, IMb ranges, active dates, relevant URLs. It's not difficult to complete, but navigating the Gateway can be daunting. This is one area where a service provider like SnailWorks can be helpful. You will also need to provide your images.

- **Optional – create a web landing page.** Give your prospects destination when they click your ads, and have a method of measuring activity.

- **Measure your results.** You can download reports from USPS that will show how many prospects got your piece by 5– digit Zip, as well as measuring web and direct mail response.

Why You Should Be Using Informed Delivery

- **Improved response to your mail.** ID coordinates another impression of your offer just as the mail arrives. As of Spring 2024, there are more than 55 million subscribers. Today we see email rates of more than 30% consistently, with open rates over 60%. You get a lot of additional impressions, which will consistently improve response rates. And the Postal Service is adding millions of subscribers a year.

- **The cost is low.** There are no Postal Service fees for participating, and service providers generally just charge simple set-up fees. No cost per thousand.

- **ID is easy.** An image or two and a URL is all you need.

- **Your prospects get another response path.** If they are intrigued by your offer, they can just click a button – your ride-along ad.

- **The benefit of a second touch with a mailing is well documented.** It increases brand awareness while providing another means of responding.

- **Gets your mail piece to top of ID email.** Mail pieces with an Informed Delivery campaign will appear near the top of your prospect's Informed Delivery email.

- **Informed Delivery promotions provide big postage savings.** In the fall of 2024 (August through December) you can save 4% on postage just for having an Informed Delivery campaign associated with the mailing.

- **Reminders feature** allows Informed Delivery subscribers to set and receive reminders for ads they'd like to see at future date.

- **Social Sharing** allows Informed Delivery subscribers to share ads with their friends and contacts via social media, text and email.

The 2024 USPS Informed Delivery Promotion

Most Letter and Flat mail entered between August 1, 2024, and December 31, 2024 will be able to claim a 4% postage discount for having an Informed Delivery campaign.

- **Eligible mail:** First-Class and Marketing Mail letters and flats sent as a Full-Service Intelligent Mail mailing.

- **Enrollment dates:** June 15, 2024 – December 31, 2024

- Enrollment can be done through the USPS Business Customer Gateway.

- **Back for 2024!** A .5% Incentive for eDoc Submitters.

- There are a lot of rules regarding design and timing required for promotion eligibility – Complete rules are available at: https://postalpro.usps.com/promotions/ID

Informed Delivery Image Specifications

Representative image:

The representative image should be prepared as a jpeg image.

- Must represent the physical mail piece either by being an exact representation of the front or back of the mail piece or very closely resemble the mail piece
    - Note: The image must be branded and directly related to the mail piece and its contents

- Sync the look of the Representative and Ride-along images to each other for a cohesive experience

- Size to at least one maximum dimension:
    - 780px width or
    - 500px height

- Save file as JPEG (.jpg)

- File cannot exceed 200 kb in size.

Ride-Along image:

The ride-along ad is prepared as a jpeg image.

- Sync the look of the Ride-along Image to the mail piece or Representative Image presented

- Treat the Ride-along Image like a branded, clickable button with a call to action

- Opt for a clean, simple layout with clear and prominent call to action

- Provide a direct URL related to the desired user action

- Size to at least one maximum dimension:
    - 300px width or
    - 200px height

- Save file as JPEG (.jpg)

- File cannot exceed 200 kb in size

SnailWorks Informed Delivery Solution
Build your campaigns and get your promotion postage discount

When you are ready to get started with Informed Delivery®, SnialWorks makes it easy and affordable.

You provide one or two jpeg images and a web address and we will:

- Create your campaign through the USPS Informed Delivery system

- Provide a sample for approval

- Provide Summary and detailed reporting on the results of your campaign:

  - How many of the names in your mailing subscribe to ID and who they are
  - Email participants
  - Email opens and click throughs
  - Landing page visits and conversions

- Reports match back to your mailing data, and are easily downloaded as csv or Excel files.

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