# The Mechanics of Mail

# **Why** Direct Mail

***Why is direct mail one of the most effective channels to grow your business?***
According to one study, 80-90% of direct mail is opened compared to only 20-30% of email.[1]

On average a person receives 6,000 to 10,000 ads a day and spends only 8 seconds on any given message . Digital content is bombarding the landscape through online pop-up ads and/or emails. The average household receives 157 emails per day compared to only 2 pieces of direct mail.[3] However, email messages can be blocked as "junk" or missed due to the mass volume received.

Mail, too, can be considered "junk", but only after the person sees it, reviews it and then makes a decision. The key is to provide value and interest on the mail piece so the recipient takes action.

## **77**%
**of people** *sort through their mail immediately.[2]*

## **70**%
**of consumers** *say direct mail is more personal than online interactions.[4]*

## **82**%
**of millennials** *view print advertisements as more trustworthy than digital marketing materials.[5]*

Neuroscience studies regarding how humans react to print advertisement also supports direct mail. One study found that direct mail generated "more brain responses connected with internal feelings, suggesting greater internalization of the ads."[6]

[1] *Small Biz Trends*
[2] *Forrester Research; Digital Information World*
[3] *USPS Marketer's Guide @USPS; USPS*

[4] *Fundera*
[5] *Myths About Millennials and Mail @USPS*
[6] *Using Neuroscience to Understand the Role of Direct Mail @MillwardBrown*

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# **Classes** of Mail

The US Postal Service® (USPS®) divides mail into different services which they call "classes." Each class of mail has different features, service levels, costs and potential postal discounts. In order to take advantage of postal discounts for high-production mail, it must be prepared according to the USPS requirements. [7]

*   *Priority Mail Express®* – anything mailable, letters, merchandise.
*   *Priority Mail®* – anything mailable, bills, invoices, personal correspondence, merchandise.
*   *First-Class Mail®* – anything mailable, bills, invoices, personal correspondence, merchandise.
*   *Periodicals* – newsletters, magazines.
*   *USPS Marketing Mail®* – advertisements, circulars, newsletters, small parcels, merchandise.
*   *Package Services and USPS Retail Ground* – merchandise, catalogs, printed material, computer media.

Two of the most common classes of mail used for direct marketing are First-Class Mail and USPS Marketing Mail.

**First-Class Mail**
This class is for basic letter rates that are delivered relatively fast, relatively low-cost and has free forwarding and returns. First-Class mail 'pre-sorted' and 'automation' discounts can apply to quantities over 500+ pieces.

Pieces that are considered first-class mail include:
*   *Handwritten or typewritten material*
*   *Bills, statements of account or invoices, credit cards*
*   *Personal correspondence, personalized business correspondence*
*   *All matter sealed or otherwise closed against inspection*

[7] USPS – https://pe.usps.com/businessmail101?ViewName=ClassesOfMail

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**USPS Marketing Mail**

USPS Marketing Mail is not First-Class or Periodicals and can be called 'Standard Mail' or 'Bulk Mail.' This class of mail has lower postage costs and many non-profit organizations utilize it to obtain 'non-profit rates.' The minimum quantity is 200 pieces or 50 pounds of mail and can typically take between 10-14 business days to arrive. Forwarding or returned mail is not included unless requested with an ancillary service endorsement.

Examples include:
- *Advertisements, circulars and form letters*
- *Catalogs and newsletters*
- *Books and parcels*

# Production Considerations

**Address Block and Standardization**

The placement of the delivery address should be in the correct location and size or it could be rejected for not meeting addressing standards. Address Standardization is the process of changing addresses to adhere to USPS standards. Automated mail processing machines read the addresses on mail pieces from the bottom up and will look at the city, state and ZIP Code. A typical address block should look as displayed:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name or attention line:** | SAM SAMPLE |
| **Company:** | CATHEDRAL CORPORATION |
| **Delivery address:** | 632 ELLSWORTH RD |
| **City, State, ZIP Code:** | ROME NY 13441 |

The National Change of Address (NCOA) is a database list managed by the USPS. Here are some interesting facts.

**1 in 6 families**
move each year.

**17%**
**of Americans** *change addresses annually.*

**45**
**million people**
*move each year.*

**Mail Tracking**

Tracking of mail is possible with the use of a barcode, called the Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb), which is placed near the address block. The IMb is a 65-bar Postal Service barcode that consists of identifiers including a routing ZIP code. It is not used on Priority Mail Express and packages. In addition, this code can be used for address correction services and notices.

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# **Postal** Services

Undeliverable mail can be handled when using USPS "ancillary service endorsements." The endorsement is placed on the address side of the outer envelope. The service selected should be chosen carefully to ensure you keep your returned mail costs down.

***Tip: Many USPS Marketing Mail results into doubling your postage cost when using "Address Service Requested" or "Forwarding Service Requested." Using address correction services prior to mailing can avoid these costs.***

Below is a summary of the USPS endorsements.
*   *Electronic Service Requested –* returned mail information is stored electronically.
*   *Return Service Requested –* mail is returned to the sender.
*   *Address Service Requested –* mail is forwarded to new address and new separate address notification is provided.
*   *Forwarding Service Requested –* mail is forwarded to new address and new address notification provided only with return.
*   *Change Service Requested –* notice is sent to the sender with new address or reason for no delivery. The USPS "disposes" all undeliverable mail.

**Informed Delivery® and Informed Visibility®**
The USPS provides access to digital formats for tracking and reporting your mailpieces. Informed Delivery sends an email with a digital preview of your mail. Informed Visibility delivers end-to-end mail tracking information for business customers.

**Secure Destruction Services**
An opt-in service, this USPS program securely shreds and recycles letter and flat-sized pieces of Undeliverable-As-Addressed (UAA) First-Class Mail® with personal protected information that would otherwise be returned to the sender (RTS).

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**Business and Courtesy Reply Mail**

First-Class Mail and USPS Marketing Mail typically contain a call-to-action which can include a reply option (Business or Courtesy Reply Mail) – a self-mailer or a form with a return envelope. The main difference between the two options is that Business Reply Mail contains prepaid postage while Courtesy Reply Mail does not. Note, the sender only gets charged postage when the piece is mailed back.

**Mailing Accuracy and Zero Defects**

It is important to ensure integrity for the production of mail, especially mail that contains critical information such as account statements, bills/invoices, explanation of benefits, investment management information, etc. Errors can result in financial loss and/or compromise confidentiality of private and privileged information. It is imperative to have access to a comprehensive insertion management solution to obtain zero-defects.

# Mail Formats

Below is a list of typical direct mail formats.

| Type | Size | Notes |
|------|------|-------|
| **Letter** | 8-1/2 x 11 | |
| | 8-1/2 x 14 | |
| | 11 x 17 | *Folds to 8-1/2 x 11 finished size.* |
| **Postcard** | 3 x 5 | *Folded postcards can provide more space for messaging and imagery.* |
| | 4 x 6 | |
| | 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 | |
| | 6 x 9 | |
| | 6 x 11 | |
| **Self-Mailer** | Multiple sizes | *No outer envelope needed.* |
| | | *Folds can provide more space for messaging and imagery.* |
| **Booklets** | 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 | *Multiple pages, but not as many pages in catalogs.* |
| **Envelopes** | #10 | *Typical for letter mailings that are folded.* |
| | 6 x 9 | |
| | 6 x 11 | |
| | 8 x 10 | |
| | 9 x 12 | |
| | Invitation | *Various invitation sizes called A2, A4, A6, A7, A9, A10, etc.* |

# Resources

**USPS Postal Explorer**
The Postal Explorer website has detailed information for designing and preparing mail.
https://pe.usps.com/

**Designers Toolbox**
There are tools for print, including Adobe InDesign templates and EPS guides at
http://www.designerstoolbox.com

**Announcement Envelope Sizes**
There are standard envelope sizes for a variety of personal stationary and/or business needs.
https://www.papersizes.org/us-envelope-sizes.htm

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