



CONTENT LIBRARY

Issue Date: March 2008 Newsletter, Posted On: 3/20/2008

Will You Be Ready for IMB by 2009? Part I

By Stephen D. Poe

Although the USPS delayed the required implementation of the Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMB) from January to May 2009, that still leaves a short time to plan, implement, test and roll out major production changes in your mission-critical transaction mail shop. Will you be ready? This is the first in a series of three articles reviewing the new IMB: what it is, what is required to implement it, and what benefits it can bring above and beyond maintaining your postage discounts.

What is IMB?

IMB implementation is far more than a simple one-to-one swap of IMB for PostNet. In addition to ZIP code routing information, IMB also carries information such as class of mail, special services requests, unique mailer ID, and unique tracking ID. This means that the IMB offers the opportunity to have each mail piece uniquely identified both before and during the mailing process. It also means other markings can be eliminated from the document and envelope, freeing up space and yielding a cleaner-looking final product.

The two levels of service - IMB Basic Service and IMB Full Service – will both require changes in how you create and track your mail. To receive the highest postal discounts you must implement IMB Full Service – not a simple task.

Taking Advantage of a Single-Point IMB Architecture

What is required to take advantage of IMB Full Service? Potentially, changing every production job that creates transaction print in your shop. Few production environments have the luxury of being able to go back and change the

composition step in all their production jobs to create an IMB with all the needed data. Most production shops either won't be able to push the changes back that far or have production jobs where the composition step is legacy or otherwise out of their control.

Choosing a post-composition document re-engineering architecture to implement IMB allows you to change all your transaction production jobs in a single place to take full advantage of the IMB. It eliminates the issue of having to make changes in multiple applications across multiple lines of business. How does this architecture work in practice?

First, you need to plan and develop a system to create the unique mail identifiers across all your production jobs and across any given 45 day window. This step is needed even if you do add the IMB in the composition step.

Then, after each transaction print file is created or received, it is passed to a document re-engineering step. This can even be accomplished by pulling jobs off the print spool, making the changes, and replacing them. During the document re-engineering step all the information needed to create a unique IMB for each mailing piece is gathered. This uses information from external files, from metadata about the production job itself (such as run date and run ID) and from information mined out of the production print stream. The IMB for each individual piece is then created.

The next step removes all the old information (e.g., PostNet barcode, PLANET codes, etc) from the statement, the new IMB added, and any additional control or audit files are created.

This architecture and these steps insure the IMB contains as much information as possible to both meet USPS regulations and to assist in the later processing of the document through the ADF production environment and to allow maximum tracking both internally and by the USPS.

Additional Value

The IMB also offers mailers the opportunity to add significant value-adds such as improved in-house and USPS mail tracking to feed back into both the mail operations and into financial operations. There are also potential savings by improved mail routing information. All of these additional value propositions assume you have implemented IMB Full service. We'll discuss these value-adds in more detail in a later article.

So, to ask again, will you be ready for IMB by May 2009?

For More Information

CrawfordTech can assist you in a successful conversion to IMB. Our award-winning PRO Document Enhancer product allows for post-composition rework of

production jobs including removing old barcodes and adding IMBs. CrawfordTech Professional Services can assist you in designing and developing the necessary changes to your production process to generate and add IMBs.

Contact CrawfordTech today at 1-866-679-0864 or sales@crowfordtech.com to learn how we can help you be ready for 2009. Visit us in booth #1208 at NPF in Anaheim in May.

About Stephen D. Poe

Stephen D. Poe, EDP is VP of Product Management for Crawford Technologies. His 20+ years in this industry have been primarily spent working for or consulting to ISVs. He is a frequent speaker at technical conference and an author in the trade press. He is a member of AIIM and Xplor International and was a member of the W3C Advisory Committee and an invited consultant to the European Standards Organization. Poe can be reached at spoe@crowfordtech.com or at booth #1208 at NPF.