



## CONTENT LIBRARY

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### **Why delay your full IMB implementation?**

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While the implementation deadline for Intelligent Mail® Barcode (IMB) is coming at us quickly, we need to pose the question "Is there any good reason to delay the implementation of IMB"? In last month's article "[Will You Be Ready for IMB by 2009? Part I](#)," we looked at the effort required to move to IMB. Many people are looking at it as an additional conversion, imposing time-consuming changes. Not everyone welcomes change and I have yet to meet IT people who like conversions. Still, if you look at what the benefits are, you may become more enthusiastic about making the cutover as soon as possible, instead of waiting until you are forced to do it by the USPS deadline.

So, what is in it for you? That depends on your role and perspective, so let's look at people in different roles and the perspectives those people may have. We will assume in this discussion that your organization has fully implemented IMB Full Service and implemented solutions for integrating the information flow available from IMB into various parts of the organization to maximize the benefits from IMB.

### **Mailing Organization**

The most obvious benefit from IMB implementation is to the mailing operations group. The continued low postage rates repay the costs on an ongoing basis. The ability to use single-line specification of services and eliminate multiple imprints for service specification, key lines, endorsement line all simplify the addressing of mail. All of the required information is on the one IMB line, making it easier to setup applications. This also means that there is a reduced amount of clutter on the printed pieces and it makes it easier to get the addressee's name and address in the window of the envelope.

Receiving instant feedback of the scans from submissions to USPS means that the mailing organization can monitor the quality of its operations, and ensure that no mail pieces are inadvertently left out

of a mailing. This information can be used to set and monitor quality levels.

### **Customer Service**

With the proper integration of IMB's capabilities into your organization's customer service system, your customer support staff will be far more knowledgeable about customer correspondence. Given correct implementation, customer support staff will be able to instantly see where a document is, from the time it is printed until it gets to the customer. They will be perceived by your customers as being very knowledgeable, and many costly and negative events such as cancellations, waived fees and reprints can be avoided, again saving the organization money and improving customer relations.

Knowing exactly when documents are going to be delivered to customers means that your Customer Support operations can be staffed more accurately for the expected workload thus saving money while improving customer service.

Once the IMB has been implemented to track return documents, customer service staff and accounts receivable staff can be more efficient. If a return document has already been put in the mail, but not yet received and/or processed, an outgoing call or dunning letter can be avoided as you already know the "check is in the mail". On the other side of the coin, when a problem customer says the "check is in the mail", you will know whether this is true or not while on the phone call, resulting in more accurate collections and better cash flow.

Knowing exactly when return documents are going to be received from customers means that payment processing operations can be staffed more accurately, again saving money and getting cash into the bank sooner.

### **Legal staff**

In cases where the proof of delivery of a document to a customer can be critical such as insurance policy cancellation notices, it will be highly beneficial to have the confirmation on record from the USPS showing the date that the document was delivered to the customer and the address it was delivered to. It will also be far more cost-effective to use highly discounted postage rates rather than expensive couriers to achieve the proof of delivery. It's a safe bet that in many organizations, the legal department will be thrilled with the use of the IMB.

### **Your Clients**

Your customers and clients will get cleaner envelopes with less "control information" on them, giving your mail (be it transactional mail or direct mail) a more professional appearance and making it easier for the customer to read the addressee information. Your customers will also receive better service, particularly when they move because of the more accurate address change verification

done as well as the electronic item return notification service you will receive. Thus your overall customer satisfaction ratings will improve.

### **Your CFO**

Your Chief Financial Officer (CFO) will be very happy that the organization is paying the lowest postal rates available for a mailer your size. The CFO will also sleep easier knowing that all billing and regulatory mailings are being tracked virtually to the customer's door without adding the cost of using a courier service. It also means that there will be checks and balances on the quality of the print and mail operation since every day a verification can be performed to ensure that all mail pieces that were to be mailed, were actually deposited with the USPS. Having the ability to monitor the operation's performance allows your organization to fine tune its processes by implementing quality improvement programs to eliminate errors and improve the overall quality of its document delivery operations.

Your CFO will also be thrilled that return payments can be tracked so that cash flow can be predicted more accurately, allowing the organization to achieve maximum value from available cash. The CFO will also not lose sleep worrying about the delivery delays that occur when your customers have moved and changed their addresses as your organization will be able to re-mail a bill as soon as the USPS sends an electronic notification that the mail piece cannot be delivered. This can shave days or weeks off of a return process that relies on physical returned envelopes.

The bottom line is that the CFO will be very pleased that the organization has been able to improve its bottom line through its use of the IMB.

### **Your CIO**

Your Chief Information Officer (CIO) will now feel more in control, as the organization will be completely plugged into the mailing process. There will be no guessing about when, or if, a bill or regulatory mailing has been delivered to each of your customers via the USPS. The ability to track, monitor and provide this information to accounting, customer service, accounts receivable, marketing, operations and other organizations will give your CIO more confidence in his organization and will make the CIO look far more effective, engendering far more respect in the organization.

### **Your CMO**

Your Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) will now be able to track mailings so that instead of relying on rules of thumb to gauge the effectiveness of direct mail campaigns, the marketing organization will be able to track and monitor their mailings precisely and use this information to more effectively measure their campaigns. With the improvements in customer support ratings, the marketing organization will have even more to be happy about.

## **Your CEO**

Your Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will sleep easier knowing that your billing and receivable processes are more reliable, that the Operations group are able to track mail all the way to and from customers, that the customer service department is more efficient and effective, that the marketing organization is more effective, and that customer satisfaction is improved all the while saving money. The bottom line is that the organization will be reducing expenses while increasing revenue and customer satisfaction, which is a winning combination in any organization.

## **You**

If you are one of the people who will contribute to the decision as to when/if IMB should be implemented, making a positive case for the overall organizational benefits as well as the obvious postage cost savings should elevate you above the people who fear change and see the implementation of the IMB as a tactical change project....and that can't hurt at employee review time.

## **Summary**

All in all, since your organization will see many benefits and add so much money to the bottom line, IMB should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a hassle. It only makes sense to start planning early, shoot for IMB Full Service, and implement as early and as fully as possible.

## **So, to ask the question again, why delay your full IMB implementation?**

In the next article in this series, we will discuss what a full implementation of IMB Full Service can look like.

## ***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 without any need for expensive application reprogramming.*

Contact CrawfordTech today at 1-866-679-0864 or [sales@crowfordtech.com](mailto: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 Ernie Crawford***

*Ernie Crawford, EDP is founder and President of Crawford Technologies Inc. His 30+ years in this industry have spanned various industries including financial, insurance, retail, transportation, printer manufacturing, service bureau, consulting and software development. Ernie is a frequent speaker at technical conferences and an author in industry journals and the trade press. He is a member of AIIM and Xplor International. Mr. Crawford can be reached at [ernie@crowfordtech.com](mailto:ernie@crowfordtech.com) or at booth #1208 at NPF.*