



Ernie Crawford
President, Crawford Technologies

Ernie's Corner

The theme of this issue is 'Going Postal.' The most critical issue in the postal world right now is the US Postal Service (USPS) and the looming deadline for cutover from POSTNET™ to the Intelligent Mail® Barcode (IMB).

Organizations that are currently saving huge amounts of money in postal discounts stand to lose those discounts if they don't make the migration. In the current financial climate, no one wants to go to their management and say "we're going to have to increase our operational budgets because we missed the deadline." That would be sheer career suicide. So organizations are under a lot of pressure to meet the May, 2011 deadline.

The USPS has mistakenly been pushing people to rewrite their applications to make this migration. For most organizations, this requires a large budget, some costing millions of dollars. Understandably, IMB has garnered a lot of criticism and pushback from large mailers who do not want to put that much time, effort and valuable IT resources into postal compliance.

As an alternative, we have been showing people that the migration can be done very quickly for a fraction of that cost. CrawfordTech's Enterprise IMB® product family is the solution. Enterprise IMB can provide a fast track and so much more of a cost-effective method of converting POSTNET barcodes to IMB barcodes. It can give you a fast roadmap to IMB compliance, make it easy to migrate to Full Service capabilities and allow you to track & manage your mail without involving development staff.

Enterprise IMB is part of the PRO Document Enhancer family, which opens up so many more capabilities including the ability to convert from OMR to 1D and 2D barcodes, addition of QR Codes, addition of Transpromo messaging and images. The PRO Document Enhancer family provides many operational improvements that can be made across your applications base in one fell swoop, without application programmer efforts required rewarding the organization with huge benefits and cost savings.

With the USPS deadline looming in May of 2011, many organizations still don't know how they're going to make it. Now might be time for you to consider CrawfordTech's fast-track solution using document re-engineering technology. Not only will it allow you to meet the USPS deadline and save potentially millions of dollars per month, but it also gives you a technology infrastructure that can save you lots of money and implement many new programs including TransPromo.

In this issue of the Crawford Courier, articles by Pat McGrew and Mike Porter explore the IMB imperative in more detail. You can also read how Micrographics Group used CrawfordTech's solutions to make their IMB strategies a reality.

In other postal news, CrawfordTech recently announced a partnership with Zumbox, an alternative to paper mail in the United States. The article by Dave Elkins, Vice President of Product Development for Zumbox, tells you all about how mailers can partake in this service in a very cost-effective manner to save billers lots of dollars.

In reality this whole issue is dedicated to saving money. As always, we look forward to your feedback. Enjoy. ♦



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Use your smart phone to scan this QR code.

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Bye-Bye PostNet, Hello IMB (Intelligent Mail Barcode)

by Pat McGrew, EDP

You have probably read that the US Postal Service has decided to delay negative postage assessments until January 2, 2011 and you might be thinking that you can delay your own implementations. In fact, that might not be the best plan. While there are certainly costs associated with implementing the IMB scheme, it might be time to think about how to make the IMB work for you to ameliorate those costs.



The Basics

Everything you could want to know from a technical perspective is documented at <https://ribbs.usps.gov/index.cfm?page=intellmailmailpieces> – the USPS National Customer Support Center web page. If this site isn't bookmarked in your favourite browser or decision engine, it should be. If you haven't read through the FAQs (which, sadly, have not been updated since 2009) it's worth the time to read. The Technical Resource Guide is similarly outdated; but nevertheless remains the bible for IMB specifications.

A more current page is the Resources List, updated in March 2010, which includes links to validation tools like the Automation Barcode Gage (Item 04A, available from your local Mailpiece Design Analyst) and a variety of IM barcode scanners and verifiers. If you don't know your local Mailpiece Design Analyst, and you should, you can look up the resource for your location here: http://pe.usps.com/mpdesign/mpdfr_mda_lookup.asp - enter the first three digits of your ZIP code.

The Deadline

Once you understand the basics you must be ready to act when the deadlines begin to hit. While the USPS has delayed implementation of IMB requirements a few times, the fact remains that POSTNET is in its last days. If you haven't laid the infrastructure to replace it, now is the time to get moving. The good news is that there is a lot of help.

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I am always an advocate of establishing a baseline, so this is a good time to ask the simple question – am I ready for IMB as the only source of postal discounts? There may be multiple answers because some jobs may come to you completely managed by your client, and others may be managed by your staff. In all cases, you need that IMB on the envelope, so will you be ready?

IMB Basic and Full Service

There are two levels of IMB – Basic and Full-service. Just to maintain current discounts you must get to the basic level by May 2011. If your answer is that basic IMB is a work in progress, this is the time to set some milestones to ensure that you'll be ready. If your answer is that basic IMB is fully implemented – Congratulations! Has it been tested and passed? If not, that is your next step.

What about taking on the challenge of full-service IMB? It is worth considering. It offers address correction and a more advanced change of address. For marketers the use of the full service IMB provides the ability to keep mailing lists clean and reduce undeliverable mail. For transaction mailers the tracking capabilities provide the best view of when mail pieces are delivered. Remember that you have to register with the USPS Help Desk to use the full service IMB and pass a few mail tests.

Next Steps

Now is the time to take the next steps with IMB. The good news? If you're reading this newsletter you should already know that there are solutions right here to meet your IMB goals! ♦

Pat McGrew, EDP, is well known in the document industry and currently a Data-Driven Communication Evangelist for Kodak Business to Business Solutions. You may contact her at: Pat.McGrew@kodak.com

It's Time To Move On

by Mike Porter

The exigent postage rate case proposal has been decided, at least for now. The U.S. Postal Service is committed to the Intelligent Mail Barcode solution, and the clock is ticking on the automation discount allowed for PostNet barcoded mail.

It's time for mailers to stop spending their energies wishing for a different scenario and instead get moving on an IMB strategy that makes sense for their organization.

IMB is the Future

Regardless of your opinion of intelligent mail, it is clear that it will be a key component of the USPS in the future. The IMB processes and procedures may change, and features, options and pricing may be adjusted as we go on, but I'm convinced that IMB will be with us no matter what. Smart mailers have embraced the technology and are looking for ways they can put it to use for themselves or their customers.

Intelligent Mail has been on the receiving end of a lot of criticism, but the negative news tends to overshadow the good points of Intelligent Mail.

These benefits should not be overlooked. Intelligent mail can help improve internal processes and provide an opportunity to create less-cluttered documents. If you use Address Correction Services, the OneCode version of ACS notifications will be less expensive.

Intelligent Mail can even serve as the spark for raising corporate awareness of the potential of mailed communications.

In an era where there are so many ways to communicate with customers, it's easy for mail to slip down the list of channels in terms of importance in the minds of marketing executives and corporate officers.

Indeed, making a case for the effectiveness of mail, and the increased visibility that IMB can enable, may be a strategy for mitigating the further erosion of mail volumes in corporate document centers.

Basic Service May be OK for Now – And Easier!

Not every organization is going to see a need for implementing the Full Service variety of IMB. For those who don't have the volume to offset the front-end investment with Full Service postage discounts, or can't make a compelling case for free address correction or free start-the-clock data, Basic Service will be a fine compromise.

There is no reason anymore to delay a project to convert from Postnet to Basic Service IMB. With the deadline now merely months away, and no indication that it will be extended, it would be irresponsible to put off the conversion any longer.

For most, preserving automation discounts is a bigger incentive than qualifying for the additional Full Service IMB discounts. And it doesn't take much to accomplish that objective. Basic Service doesn't require unique mail piece ID numbers, unique numbers on containers or pallet labels on the outside of the shrink wrap. Basic Service does not even require mailers to submit electronic postage statements.

Steps that mailers must take to meet the minimum requirements for keeping their existing postage discounts include getting a Mailer ID number from the USPS and using approved software that generates the barcodes, reports and container labels.



“Intelligent Mail has received a lot of criticism, but the negative news tends to overshadow the good points of Intelligent Mail.”

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Are your IMB migration projects on track for May 2011?

As of September 2010, mailers had deposited nearly 40 billion mail pieces with Intelligent Mail barcodes (IMB).

Beginning in May 2011, to be eligible for automation prices on letter-size and flat-size mail pieces, mailers will need to use the IMB, either the Full Service or Basic option, in place of the POSTNET barcode.

Additionally the PLANET Code barcode, used with the Confirm service for mail tracking, will be retired. To receive Confirm service after May 2011, mailers will have to use the full-service IMB.

This means that mailers who do not implement IMB on time will lose their discounts of up to 10.5 cents per piece. For every 1 million mail pieces you send a month without IMBs, that's a direct loss of up to \$1.26m a year.

There is so much money at stake! If your IMB migration projects are behind, at risk, or you just want a 'Plan B', you should contact CrawfordTech now to learn how our Enterprise IMB® solution can be implemented easily, quickly and cost-effectively - before time runs out.



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The procedures are not a great deal different from the way automation mail has been prepared over the last several years. In some cases, there may be some minor document redesign necessary to accommodate the size of the new IMB code so be sure to review the physical characteristic requirements for the barcode and verify that mail pieces conform. Reviews by USPS Mailpiece Design Analysts may be helpful.

That's it for a lot of mailers, at least to start! The software vendors have done most of the work. And many of them can help as mailers progress through their conversions to IMB. As comfort levels rise mailers can add features such as electronic documentation, special services requests or mail piece tracking.

Add Functionality As Needed

If mailers can improve business processes by implementing certain IMB features now then by all means plan to do so. Start with only the features that have a real value. Remember that sometimes internal processes must be developed to import the USPS-supplied data and use it effectively.

In the future, the USPS may have even more to offer. The ability to gather more data about the mail they are handling may open the door to other services that mailers will find attractive.

For now, take the time to analyze requirements and choose the best IMB solution with consideration for budget and time restraints. The deadline is in May. That doesn't leave a lot of time. ♦

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Microdynamics replaces disparate software with scalable solutions from Crawford Technologies

Chicago-based service provider turns to CrawfordTech to add USPS IMB functionality, convert legacy output and update folder/inserter systems

CrawfordTech's range of software applications are designed with ease-of-implementation in mind. Companies can rapidly add the USPS Intelligent Mail® Barcode to their output, convert legacy data streams and modify both printed and digital customer communications without having to alter the contents at the document composition level. Since all CrawfordTech software works on a common architecture, it is easy to add applications and functionality at any time.



About Microdynamics

Founded in 1974, Microdynamics Group is one of America's leading providers of printed and electronic billing solutions. Microdynamics provides one source for the printing, mailing and electronic delivery of invoices, bills and statements. Microdynamics has over a thousand satisfied customers, from the small but rapidly growing to the world-class Fortune 1000. Their corporate mission is to provide turnkey solutions that improve efficiency, customer relationships and technology for future requirements.

What was the problem?

Like many service providers, Microdynamics has to invest in solutions that can give them the highest levels of flexibility. When one of their clients provided legacy Xerox LCDS input files, Microdynamics needed to find a way to convert these to an alternate format for printing and replace the existing POSTNET™ barcode with the new USPS Intelligent Mail® Barcode (IMB) in order to maintain their postal discounts after May 2011.

In the United States, the POSTNET barcode includes just enough information to route the envelope to its destination. The new IMB system tells you who the envelope is from, where it is going, the class of the mail and optionally a unique serial number that allows for full tracking of outbound and inbound mail pieces.

In addition to the conversion of the input files, and the addition of the IMB, it was a condition of the project that Microdynamics achieve this without any changes to the originating applications.

How did CrawfordTech help?

Microdynamics initially made use of the CrawfordTech Operations Express document re-engineering solution to achieve their USPS IMB requirements. By altering the output at the print-stream level, the IMB was implemented without any changes to the originating applications or any middleware solutions.

Because CrawfordTech products sit within a common architecture, all the solutions employed by Microdynamics are modular in nature, allowing for an initial low-impact roll-out while allowing the option to scale the system and add extra functionality later.

Thanks to this common architecture, Microdynamics is able to expand the use of their CrawfordTech solution to solve other key business issues and replace two incumbent systems with one easy-to-manage, scalable solution.

In addition to using Operations Express, Microdynamics now makes use of the PRO Indexer software to extract the name and address information from the mail piece. This is then passed through an address cleansing and pre-sorting system (Microdynamics uses Finalist, MailStream Plus, Code-1 and Verimove for CASS/Pave/Presort/NCOA functions). The resulting file is ingested by Operations Express to replace and re-sequence the current addresses with the cleansed version.

Since implementing Operations Express for their initial IMB requirements, Microdynamics has gone on to extend their relationship with CrawfordTech to include transformation and processing of PostScript and PCL input files, which allows Microdynamics to enhance their offerings to their customers, improve service for their customers and grow their revenue.

Announcing the CrawfordTech Awards 2010

Could you be our winner?

Fifteen years ago, almost to the day, Crawford Technologies was founded by Ernie Crawford in Toronto, Canada. Today, we want to celebrate a decade and a half of innovation by launching the CrawfordTech Awards 2010. And you could be one of our winners.

We're looking for the best write-ups that detail how CrawfordTech products have helped you and your organization. Whether you are a long-term client or have just started out with CrawfordTech software, we want you to tell us the innovative, money-saving, efficiency-generating and interesting ways you have implemented our solutions.

These write-ups will be voted on by both the CrawfordTech community and our own panel of experts. In just over three months time, after the shortlist has been created and the voting has finished, we'll announce the winners.

Five organizations will receive the coveted CrawfordTech Award. Four of these companies will receive a donation of \$400 to give to their nominated charities and the overall winner will receive a donation of \$800 for their charity along with the CrawfordTech Overall Winner Award for 2010.

So, tell us your stories and you could be a winner!

Please visit <http://www.crawfordtech.com/news-events/crawfordtech-awards-2010> for full details and to complete the survey. We'll be accepting entries until January 14th 2011. ♦



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In addition, a recent project involved the use of CrawfordTech products to interpret the values of different OMR marks and convert them to produce Code 3of9 barcodes. These codes made it possible for Microdynamics to use newer folder and inserting machines at their preferred print site to improve mailing reliability and efficiency.

"We have successfully grown in this market by focusing on invoices and statements and consistently building our expertise. As well as providing a highly customized service for our clients, ensuring we're adding value to every piece, we are duty-bound to ensure that the delivery of invoices and statements is as cost-effective as possible", says Thomas Harter, Jr., Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Microdynamics.

"We have been able to solve our tactical IMB issues and by leveraging CrawfordTech's approach to their software solutions, we are benefiting from savings in time and costs. Importantly, we have been able to do this without changes to our existing systems, and that alone is worth applauding."

Conclusion

CrawfordTech's full range of transactional customer communications products meet a variety of needs for Microdynamics. Not only are CrawfordTech products pivotal to their IMB postal implementation, but the extension of that project to take in document re-engineering, interaction with address cleansing and pre-sorting software, conversion of output in multiple formats and management of OMR marks - all without requiring application changes - means they were able to replace multiple solutions with a scalable approach from a single provider.

CrawfordTech products support input files in AFP, Xerox Metacode (DJDE, LCDS), PCL, PostScript, PDF and other popular formats, and our products work on all major platforms including Windows, Linux, Solaris, HP-UX, AIX, z/OS and Linux for System z.

Read more about our Operations Express, PRO Indexer, PRO Transforms and other solutions at: www.crawfordtech.com. ♦

What Is Suppressing Your Paper Suppression?

Dave Elkins, Vice President of Product Development, Zumbox

Paper suppression programs generally start well enough. Technology is brought onboard, customers are signed-up, and initial results seem promising. Over time, suppression levels reach 10, even 15 percent.

At that point, e-mail and a website have begun replacing postal mail, saving the company money, and reducing its carbon footprint. Everyone is pleased.

Then it happens: New sign-ups stall and small improvements require big effort. The paper suppression goal, either formal or what intuition suggests ought to be possible, seems ever farther away.

"Companies have found that most customers don't like the other options available to them today and aren't willing to sign-up to suppress paper," said John Payne, President and CEO of Zumbox.

"Today's online systems don't meet their needs and customers stay away. For reference and filing, paper billing is much more convenient than most electronic solutions. They prefer the simplicity of an overstuffed bankers box to the complexity of having to remember the multiple websites and multiple logons to get their digital records."

More importantly, customers can never be sure that an e-mail is really from who it claims to be from. For many customers, the concept of transactional e-mail is more threat than convenience.

For those reasons and others, individual company web sites combined with e-mail will never break through the current "glass ceiling" of participation in most paper suppression programs, Payne said.

"People don't trust transactional e-mail, and for good reason. E-mail is too easy to spoof, too easy for criminals to use. Customers know this and are staying away."

Most electronic billing programs do not offer customers as good an experience as the paper-based billing they already use, lacking quick access to account and transaction details as well as hard-copy look, feel, and file-ability.

"Customers already know how paper mail works and companies have built their businesses around it," Payne said. "To be successful, paper suppression can't do away with the benefits of paper or force mailers to change how they do business."

Zumbox has created an alternative to current paper suppression technology which solves many of these problems, making higher paper suppression adoption a reality.

What is "Digital Postal Mail"?

Zumbox offers a hybrid technology it calls 'Digital Postal Mail,' that offers the best of both electronic delivery and paper-based transactional mail. Here is the Zumbox definition of the term:

Digital: Zumbox replaces the letter carrier with secure digital delivery of electronic documents. Zumbox supports electronic payments and access to customer service over the Internet. Zumbox eliminates paper, provides automatic archiving, and allows customers to access their mail from any web browser anywhere on the Internet.

Postal: Zumbox uses familiar metaphors--like mailboxes, envelopes, and file folders. Zumbox documents are searchable and stored until the customer discards them, making them more convenient than paper documents.



"Zumbox offers a hybrid technology it calls 'Digital Postal Mail,' that offers the best of both electronic delivery and paper-based transactional mail."

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Mail: Zumbox uses the customer's physical address as their Zumbox address. The Zumbox address changes whenever the customer changes their physical address. The customer's Zumbox and its contents remains, however, regardless of how many times the physical address is changed.

Available securely over the Internet from any Web browser and most smart phones, Zumbox is free to customers and promises to store their bills and statements forever.

Zumbox documents display and print as exact replicas of their paper counterparts. And checking your Zumbox only requires you to log-in once for all your documents, not once for each sender.

Zumbox offers major benefits for mailers.

Simplicity: Zumbox integrates with your existing mail workflow. Once installed, Zumbox does not require ongoing attention--except when mailers notice their mailing costs decreasing and paper suppression levels rising. For many mailers, adding Zumbox will be as simple as instructing your mail provider to turn it on.

Data Management: Because Zumbox uses recipients' physical addresses as their Zumbox address, mailers already know how to reach Zumbox users. This removes collecting and maintaining customer e-mail addresses as a key component of paper suppression.

Aggregation: As new mailers join the Zumbox community, the service automatically connects them with existing Zumbox users. Likewise, new users can select Zumbox delivery from any company that sends digital postal mail to Zumbox as part of the Zumbox community. As new companies join, Zumbox notifies customers who are already Zumbox members.

Zumbox users can select Zumbox delivery from a list of companies available to them. The larger the Zumbox community becomes, the more it benefits both mailers and their customers.

Electronic payments: Zumbox is not in the electronic payments business and does not take a percentage of payments made through its system.

Cost: Zumbox costs as much as 70 percent less than traditional postal delivery.

Ease-of-Integration: Zumbox already works with mailing services. Mailers simply request the service and promote Zumbox to their customers. Zumbox is also available as an inexpensive add-on for popular software, like that from Crawford Technologies.

Risk-Free: Because Zumbox is offered as a service, mailers do not pay until Zumbox has begun saving them money. There are no up-front or delivery charges until customers go paperless.

Zumbox offers major benefits for customers.

Secure: Zumbox offers a variety of notification options when mail arrives in the customer's Zumbox. Documents are delivered using a secure web browser connection and all messages are from known and verified senders. Zumboxes do not have e-mail addresses and cannot be reached by unauthorized senders.

Convenient: Zumbox offers a single, convenient mailbox that also serves as the user's perpetual electronic filing cabinet for transactional mail. As the customer's physical mailing address changes, so does their Zumbox address.

Controlled: Customers choose the mailers allowed to send to their Zumbox and may opt-out from an individual sender or close their Zumbox at any time.

Free: Customers are never charged for using Zumbox.



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Why should I think about Zumbox now?

First, postage rate increases from USPS are coming soon, which is continuing to draw negative attention to the increasing costs of mail delivery.

Second, Zumbox is a new service, but a rapidly growing one. In 2011, our existing mailer relationships will generate significant volume. However, Zumbox works best when new users can find as many of their current mailers as possible offering Zumbox delivery.

For that reason, we are offering--for a limited time--special incentives for mailers to join the Zumbox community, helping us offer millions of users an incredible experience from their very first day.

Crawford Technologies recently launched a range of Zumbox Enablers to make it easy to connect your transactional customer communications to the Zumbox service. To find out more about how CrawfordTech and Zumbox work together, talk to your CrawfordTech Account Manager.

The Zumbox community is the next generation of paper suppression, offered risk-free for both mailers and their customers.

To find out more about Zumbox, to to <http://whitepapers.zumbox.com>, where you can download a free whitepaper or talk to CrawfordTech. ♦

About Crawford Technologies Inc.

Since 1995, Crawford Technologies' award-winning solutions have helped over 700 companies around the world reduce costs associated with communications' processes by delivering bills, statements and other mission-critical transactional communications to their customers in the format they need, when they need it.

This includes alternate format documents in Braille, Large Print, Audio and E-text for visually impaired and print-disabled customers.

With CrawfordTech's range of unique software products and services, our clients simplify, automate and extend document delivery cost effectively - irrespective of current, legacy or future standards in infrastructure or document output.

These clients, including four of the top five US banks, four of the top five US insurance companies and four of the world's top five car manufacturers, are realising high-value results as costs associated with document processes are minimised through automation, new opportunities for savings across critical communications are realised and they react quickly to changes in regulations, policies, business requirements and technical infrastructure.

CrawfordTech's quality software, expert support and print business knowledge help clients to meet operational, service, marketing, legal and compliance requirements and automate the delivery of billions of communications to their customers annually.

Simply put, companies look to Crawford Technologies for a platform-independent approach, leading system performance and superior output fidelity.

Please visit www.crawfordtech.com to find out more about CrawfordTech's clients, people, partners and solutions.

