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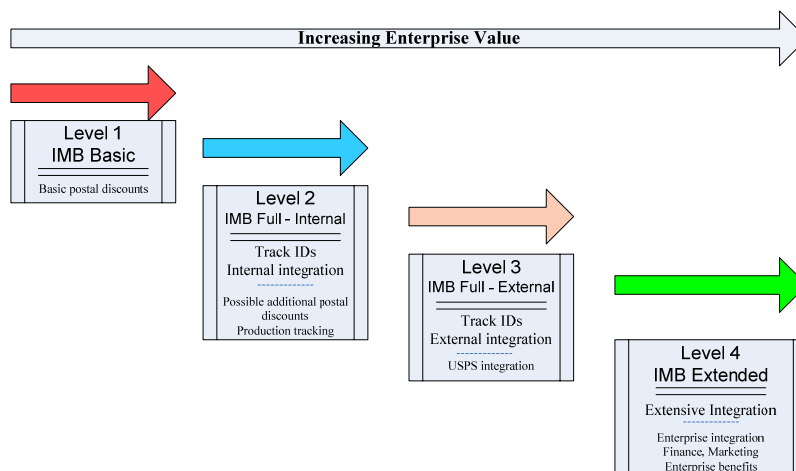
Will You Be Ready for IMB by 2009? Part III

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In part I of this series we discussed what IMB is and how to take advantage of a single IMB architecture (see [Will You Be Ready for IMB by 2009? Part I](#) in the March MST); in part II we discussed the benefits to your entire enterprise, not just the mail room (see [Why Delay your Full IMB Implementation?](#)). In this final article we discuss how you can plan and implement an IMB migration that takes you from an easy initial start with IMB progressively up to higher levels of benefits and eventually into a full, enterprise-wide IMB system. Your organization's current requirements may not justify immediately implementing a complete enterprise-wide IMB system but the migration path to do so in the future remains.

IMB Implementation Path

IMB can be implemented as a series of four steps (see Figure 1), each step increasing the benefits to your organization. This approach allows you to start slowly with minimal impact to your current production processes and gradually add functionality and value to other departments using IMB's mail piece tracking capability, should you desire those benefits.



Level 1 – Getting Started

Level 1 concentrates on getting IMB Basic installed and running. Here the emphasis is on creating Basic IMBs (without Tracking IDs) and getting them on the paper. This level allows you to start producing mail with IMBs with minimal internal impact on existing processes. There are four options in the transaction document creation and mailing process to put IMBs on paper:

- Document Composition
- Document Re-Engineering post-composition
- Electronic Commingling
- External Sortation

Most organizations will not have the luxury of selecting only one of these four for all their transactional mail. Due to the diversity of lines of business applications, different software systems, legacy applications and time to market windows, frequently a different option to add IMBs will have to be chosen for your applications. You need to find a vendor who is flexible and can assist you in adding IMBs in all four possible process options.

We recommend you start small. Select one or two lines of business with a common option and replace your POSTNET™ and Planet Code barcodes with IMB Basic. This provides basic postal discounts and gives you initial experience in getting IMBs on paper. Then, you may want to move to Level 2 for more benefits.

Level 2 – IMB Full Internal

At Level 2, you add Unique IDs to your IMBs to enable the USPS full service options and achieve maximum postal discounts. Doing this assures that each mail piece you produce has a unique identification number. The unique IDs can still be added at any of the 4 document handling options described in Level 1, but this requires a centralized tracking facility to ensure the uniqueness across all applications for the required 45 day period.

The IMBs with unique identifiers, called IMB Full Service, allows you to take advantage of the best possible postage discounts improving the ROI on this project.

The unique IMB mail piece identifier can also be used to track the mail pieces internally through your entire print and mail operation. You can tie in to your current and future document/mail operations such as:

- ADF
- Mail Piece Reconciliation
- Reprint processes

Adding internal mail piece tracking using IMBs into your document/mail operations realizes immediate benefits in terms of better knowledge of the location and status of all mail pieces in your shop, easier ability to reprint, and better ability to track mail pieces through your operations.

Some organizations may see the benefits of Level 2 implementation as sufficient to meet their goals, and decide to stay with that level of implementation. Those who want more benefits can move on to Level 3.

Level 3 - IMB Full External

At Level 3, you start tracking your mail pieces through their entire life cycle. Tracking starts at document creation, continues for the USPS-required 45 days and also extends after the mail leaves your facility. External Mail Piece tracking opens a further set of benefits to you, especially when you tie the IMB-based mail piece tracking externally to the USPS OneCode services.

You add in the USPS OneCode services:

- Confirm®
- ACS

Using the USPS OneCode Confirm® you can receive updates on the status of where your mail is and when it will be delivered, allowing you to better predict mail delivery, confirm mail delivery, and open the way for Level 4 integration. You can also take advantage of Address Change Service at this level.

Another capability is tracking return documents. By placing IMB barcodes on the return documents, they can be uniquely identified and tracked to your facility. This can enable many additional benefits should you move to the next level of implementation.

Level 4 – Enterprise IMB

In Level 4 implementation, you combine your ability to track all your mail pieces, both outbound and inbound, and leverage that data to provide value-adds through visibility to other departments, including Finance and Marketing. Functions that can benefit from the captured data include:

- Lock box staffing projections
- Cash flow projections
- Statement tracking
- Delivery confirmation of bills and notices
- Customer support staffing
- Message tracking, both at the individual piece and at the aggregate levels.

With Enterprise IMB implementation you have maximized the benefits of IMB across your entire enterprise. By implementing one Level at a time you've eased your transition into IMB and set achievable milestones along the way.

Implementing IMB in Your Operation

Will you be ready in 2009? Use the four step approach described here to implementing IMB and you can be ready for 2009.

- Start off with Level 1; get Basic IMBs on paper for one or two applications to introduce your shop to the technology.

- Move to Level 2; add Unique IDs to achieve maximum postal discounts and track your mail pieces internally through your print and mail operations. This is the point where you will need to be by May 2009 to obtain the best USPS pricing.
- Move to Level 3; Take advantage of the USPS OneCode Confirm® to track your mail after it leaves your facility.
- Finally advance to Level 4 to utilize the benefits of Enterprise IMB to track your mail both internally throughout the organization, externally and then back for applications requiring a response.

You do not have to implement all 4 levels of this strategy by May 2009. However, establishing a long term strategy now will allow you to work towards achieving the maximum benefits from the investment your organization will be making in its move to IMB.

Crawford Technologies Can Help

CrawfordTech can assist you in a successful migration to IMB.

- CrawfordTech Professional Services can assist you in designing and developing the necessary changes to your production process to generate and add IMBs.
- Visit us at NPF in Booth #1208 and ask us about our Enterprise IMB solutions.
- Click here to visit our website and find out more details about how you can implement Enterprise IMB solutions.

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

We look forward to helping you successfully implement IMB before the 2009 deadline.

About Stuart Warner

As Vice President of Sales & Marketing, Stuart is responsible for worldwide direct and indirect sales channels, marketing planning and marketing communications. As a 25 year veteran of the high volume transactional production printing industry, Stuart has held a broad range of management responsibilities including Operations, Technology, Product Management, Project Management, Product Marketing and Sales in organizations such as Xerox Canada Ltd., INTRIA Items Inc., Canada Systems Group, Fiserv Corporation and the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board of Ontario.