

U.S. Census Bureau

With a mandate to count everyone in the country, the U.S. Census Bureau and the Government Printing Office (GPO) worked with industry experts to design and execute a data-driven approach to direct mail that yielded stronger results and dramatic savings.

The first census was conducted in 1790 and counts all U.S. residents every ten years. Responses to the 2010 Census will determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives. Census data is also used to re-draw the boundaries of Congressional districts each decade and distribute more than \$400 billion in federal funding to state, local and tribal programs.

The U.S. Census Bureau and GPO started planning for the 2010 Census Mailing soon after the 2000 Census was complete.

The goal was to maximize mail response, reduce costs and limit the number of house-to-house interviews that would be required.

“It cost approximately \$57 a case to do in-field follow-up,” explains James Marsden, Print and Mail Manager for the U.S. Census Bureau. “In order to improve participation by mail and save money, we sent a replacement mailing in between the initial mail and the field work. Given the volume, complexity, turn-time and security requirements, however, we needed to work with industry leaders who offered technology and expertise.”

Pitney Bowes made it possible with integrated front- and back-end automation including the FlowMaster® inserter, iSite™ Vision system and Olympus® mail sorting solutions.

High-productivity systems boost security—and savings

As a constitutional mandate, the census plays a pivotal role in U.S. government and officials understood that security issues, both physical and IT, could undermine success. “In a post-9/11 world, security was a major consideration, especially given the size of the initial mailing,” notes Marsden. “In 2010, modern technology allowed for a centralized operation with a single vendor solution—so we could mail 130 million questionnaires from a secure environment.”

The Government Printing Office awarded the Print 2010 contract to R.R. Donnelley. R.R. Donnelley and their subcontractor Superior Mailing Services worked with Pitney Bowes to customize a fleet of 12 FlowMaster Inserting Systems with inline document and envelop printing, document matching, scanning, tracking and automated quality control features. “In the past, we would have needed ten times the number of swing arm inserters,” Marsden adds. “For this census, we were able to handle this much more efficiently, due to the latest technology.”

High-integrity sorters add speed and piece-level tracking

Completed questionnaires were directed to three sites managed by Lockheed Martin. There, teams would capture, scan and deliver data to the Census Bureau.

CASE STUDY



Challenge

Increase mail response on the 2010 Census to avoid costly in-field follow-up.

Solution

Integrated front- and back-end automation allowed census officials to re-mail 40 million non-responders in a two-week window.

As the first critical step in this paper process, twenty Pitney Bowes Olympus Sorters operated approximately 18 hours, five days a week and a single shift on Saturdays, helping Lockheed Martin exceed their Service Level Agreements. "Pitney Bowes sorters helped us process the mail that came in," notes Michael Merz, Lockheed Martin's Subcontractor Program Manager. "These sorters were assembled with cutters on the machine, so they could actually slice open each mail piece. Then, the sorters would automatically scan the barcode and route each individual questionnaire to the appropriate pocket—so we could prioritize data entry based on Census Bureau needs.

Data-driven re-mail yields an additional 3.7 million responders

Intelligent Mail® barcode data printed on each completed survey was then relayed back to the mail creation site, so the Census Bureau could instantly purge responders from the re-mail file.

The combination of an innovative open-window design, production intelligence and the speed of the FlowMaster systems allowed the Census Bureau to send out 15 million targeted re-mails in five days and 25 million blanketed re-mails in 3 days—which provided enough time to generate 3.7 million more completed questionnaires that would not require field-staff follow-up.

"Our ability to turnaround a replacement mailing in a matter of days yielded an additional 3.7 million returns—which saved \$200 million in field costs."

James Marsden, Program Manager – Print and Mail Distribution, U.S. Census Bureau

RESULT

Census Bureau officials believe that their decision to consult with industry experts early in the planning process helped create a solid roadmap for their 2010 campaign.

"Everything came together in 2010," Marsden explains. "Overall, the Census generated a 74% mail participation rate. Our ability to turnaround a targeted replacement mailing in a matter of days yielded an additional 3.7 million returns—which saved \$200 million in field costs."

Given that census mailings occur only once every ten years, there was no room for error—and team members from the GPO, Census Bureau, R.R. Donnelley, Superior Mailing, Lockheed Martin and Pitney Bowes collaborated to design a seamless workflow.

"Our close collaboration with our contract partners and the latest technology played a key role in the success of our mailing operation," Marsden notes. "We were on time and on budget in this operation, to the benefit of the 2010 Census and the American taxpayer."

"Pitney Bowes' onsite support and maintenance had an impact," Merz adds. "If there were ever any issues, the hands-on involvement of management helped ensure we were continuously running."

The Pitney Bowes advantage

The integrated workflow reporting system developed by Pitney Bowes provided for a central repository of data, which updated systems in real time. The ability to leverage barcode technology reduced manual touchpoints, cutting labor costs while improving integrity.



Pitney Bowes
Document Messaging Technologies
37 Executive Drive
Danbury, CT 06810-4148
Main: 877-536-2736
www.pb.com

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