Integrating Mailing Services to become a Total Solutions Provider

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OVERVIEW:

The purpose of this plan is to assist print for pay owners with integrating mailing services into current offerings to

• increase revenue through mail processing fees,
• increase print revenue
• increase overall value to the customer.

This can be accomplished by conducting an analysis of existing applications and needs and investigating potential business within your marketplace. Once these income opportunities are established, a business plan can be set into motion that includes marketing, procurement of products needed to process the jobs and most importantly education.

GETTING STARTED:

1 - Collect information on any jobs that you are currently outsourcing to a mail house to process. Determine the amount of revenue that is being shifted to the service provider. Assess the services that are being provided (list management, addressing, tabbing, folding and inserting…).

2- Determine customers/applications that have requested mailing services in the past that you have had to turn down. This may be something as simple as tabbing, or as involved as maintaining an address list, determining a discounted postage rate or merging with a document.

3 – Determine the additional customers/applications that could be secured if you offered mailing services. Remember that 100% of items in the mail stream need to be printed! Being able to create, produce and deposit into the mail stream a document could result in greater print revenue.

4 – Save samples of jobs that are sent to mail houses to refer to when it is time to look at possible equipment solutions to automate the process. Also, it’s a good idea to save your invoices from the mail houses so you can easily determine market pricing in your area. This will also help you decide when it makes sense to outsource or to get your own hardware or software.

5 – Determine a geographical area to target for additional business. However, do not limit yourself to this as most jobs can be processed electronically. Perhaps there is a vertical market (non-profit, education, retail) that you are most comfortable with that you would like to target.

6 – Determine what competition is in your area and what they are charging. This may be difficult to do, but your customers may be able to help by sharing quotes with you. Find out what services they are offering and what could you present to stand apart from the competition. It all starts with the relationship and customer service.
PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS AND CHARGES

Before you get started be sure to have a price list and some marketing material. Sample rate sheets are included in this plan. A more extensive survey can be obtained from QP Consulting and their Mailing Services Pricing Study.

Have an order sheet available listing your mailing service offerings.

You may want to offer special package deals for customers that do their printing, list maintenance and mailing with you. Remember that they are looking to you for advice on mail piece design and guidance on postage rates. You add value by understanding how the design will affect the amount of postage required for each piece.

PROMOTING YOUR SERVICES TO EXISTING CUSTOMERS:

As you are printing the piece, you will know if it will end in the mail flow at some point. Simply ask “May I mail that for you?” You also want to point out the importance of a good mailing list. Why mail to an address that is wrong? It is a waste of postage, printed material and the message if the piece just ends up in the trash. Everyone has a bin of “returned envelopes with yellow stickers” they will get to “some day” and update their list. Remind them that the return mail bin is filled with dollar bills.

Your first mailing should be your own announcing the addition of mailing services to you menu of offerings. This will give you the opportunity to manipulate and cleanse a list, design a mail piece that is within specifications, prepare and process the mail as well as deposit it at the postal facility. Most importantly, you can do this mailing without the burden of a deadline or the satisfaction of the customer looming on the horizon. This mailing could be as simple as a postcard or a letter. Make it creative and attractive, as it will be seen as a sample of your abilities. You may want to include PURL or QR codes as well.

Make sure your customer understands that direct mail is a vital part of a complete marketing package. Studies have shown that over 50% of all website visits were initiated by something that was received in the mail. As always, direct mail will mean printed media!

FINDING NEW CUSTOMERS:

Ask for referrals from existing customers. Implement a referral discount program.

Examine the mail that comes to your business/home every day. Take note of any duplicate pieces, marketing pieces that were mailed at first class instead of standard mail, addresses that did not include a barcode. These are all opportunities for you to reduce
their cost of mailing. Implement a shop program so all employees get involved in examining their mail and submitting prospective customer’s information.

Do a mailing using the USPS ‘Every Door Direct Mail’ promotion. This would allow you to mail to every location in a 5 zip code area without a needing a list. Become familiar with this program as it should be one you are offering to do for your customers.

Become active in local networking groups, including the Postal Customer Council. They meet regularly to discuss any postal regulation changes. The council will include potential customers.

**HOW TO EQUIP YOUR STORE WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS**

You will need to formulate a hardware/software package based on the needs of your customers. The following are questions to consider:

**On a monthly basis, how many pieces do we need to process? What is the size of my largest job?** One job of 50,000 has different requirements than 25 jobs of 2,000 pieces.

**How much space do I have available for processing?** You will need a computer work station, an area for being able to print variable data, and possibly an area for a tabber and folder/inserter.

**Am I sending any self-mailers that will require tabbing?** If you are mailing a folded, non-inserted piece you must seal it with a tab (or multiple tabs) to qualify for postal discounts. If designed correctly, a single tab of the top may be enough. Be sure to be familiar with USPS tabbing requirements. You don’t want to have a mailing rejected and require higher postage because it was not tabbed correctly.

**What variable data do I need to print on the mail piece?** Will you be printing the “static” information on a press and only need to add the address and barcode? Or are you looking for a solution that will print full color matched information as well as variable data in a single pass? Don’t forget about printing the permit also.

**What type of media will I be working with?** Most printing equipment, in addition to speed specifications, have media limitations. Be familiar with the thickness, finish, and physical dimensions of your mail pieces. If you are considering an ink jet address printer, don’t forget the importance of a conveyor and dryer.

**What are my software requirements?** You will need a CASS and PAVE certified software program to maintain and cleanse your customers list. Be sure to include a way to NCOA the list for the most current address. This has great value to the customer. Most software solutions are available on an annual subscription basis. There are some that are now available as a cloud based solution. Those
solutions may look attractive at first, but be sure to figure an estimated annual cost.

**Who will be my mailing specialists?** Someone will need to have ownership of this process. They will have to become familiar with USPS regulations, become friendly with the bulk mail dock workers, understand customer needs and learn how the software and equipment operates. This is a job of great importance to the success of your shop.

**What USPS resources are available to me?** The USPS has customer service representatives and mail piece design analysts to help along the way. Their RIBBS website is a great source for information. Also be sure to evaluate how your vendor of your software/hardware solutions can assist with the education. Be sure to subscribe to the MailPro publication the USPS offers, at no charge.

Mailing services will require a learning curve, but can be a very important part of the overall success of your center. To provide the complete market solution for your customer it must include mailing. Find a way to create revenue by integrating mailing services. Make postal education and marketing a priority so you can insure success.