

SOLUTIONS

Spring-clean your database

The ability to keep track of your customer's latest address is the key benefit of First Direct Solutions' National Change of Address database. *Priority* talks to Michael Quillerat, National Manager Product and Marketing, to find out how cleansing your database can help retain existing customers, find lost ones and save you money. **STORY** LISA BOWMAN

Q: What is the National Change of Address database and how does it work?

A: The National Change of Address database contains the new address details of people who have moved house and used Australia Post's Mail Redirection service. These details are collected when movers complete a Mail Redirection form and give express consent to Australia Post to pass on their new address details to a third party.

The National Change of Address data cleansing service works by washing your database of customers against the National Change of Address database. This identifies any addresses that need to be updated. If a mover has granted permission, via their Mail Redirection form, for Australia Post to provide their new address details, their details are supplied back to you so you can keep in touch.

Q: How many people move each year?

A: About three million people in Australia move each year* and approximately 80 per cent of these use Australia Post's Mail Redirection service. You can imagine how quickly your company's database can become out of date – particularly if you have a large database.

*Source: Mail Redirection and Mail Hold Research, Alliance Strategic Research Pty Ltd, February 2008

Q: What do I receive when you return my database after it has been washed against the National Change of Address database?

A: Once complete, you will be provided with an updated file, a report outlining where new addresses have been supplied and your original database. We can also advise you of the number of customers who have changed address but who did not consent for their details to be passed on. For these customers, we can send a letter on your behalf.

Q: Is there a way to reach customers who haven't agreed to pass on their new address details?

A: Yes, as mentioned, you can reach these customers through our Re-Connect service. We send a letter on your behalf to the person who has moved. The letter lets your customer know that you have their old address on file and that you want to obtain their new address. The Re-Connect service encourages these customers to make contact either by phone or by returning a tear-off address update slip in the Reply Paid envelope provided.

Q: How often is the National Change of Address database updated?

A: The database is updated on the first weekend of every month and takes into account all of the new Mail Redirection records from the previous month.

Q: How often should I wash my database against the National Change of Address database?

A: We recommend that you run the National Change of Address database monthly or quarterly if you're serious about the accuracy of a mailing. It is also a good idea to use the National Change of Address service when you're sending out a major direct mail campaign or an important mailing. This can help to ensure that the mail piece reaches its intended recipient and reduces your return-to-sender mail.

Q: What are some of the best results you've seen from businesses that undertake regular data cleansing?

A: The best results come from companies that use a combination of our National Change of Address, Re-Connect and return-to-sender processing services, because this provides the most extensive and thorough data cleanse. The main benefits they tell us about include significant reductions of return-to-sender mail, which means better value for the money spent on postage. However, the benefits of finding a lost customer can pay dividends for many years – as many companies realise when they get serious about updating their database. ■

RESUSCITATING MEMBERSHIPS

Ambulance Victoria's members are a vital part of its service. They allow the service to maintain and improve life-saving skills and equipment. In return, Victorian members receive ambulance transport, paramedic care and treatment, including air ambulance, throughout Victoria and Australia.

However, the service discovered that each year some 20,000 of these valuable members simply go missing, because they forget to pass on their new address details.

First Direct Solutions helped Ambulance Victoria to recapture these members through a combination of the National Change of Address service and the Re-Connect service. The National Change of Address service allows Ambulance Victoria to update its database with the new addresses of any members who have moved. These details have been collected through Australia Post's Mail Redirection service. Customers who fill in a Mail Redirection form can indicate whether they are happy for Australia Post to pass on their new address details in line with current privacy legislation.

The Re-Connect service takes the process of finding lost members a step further. First Direct Solutions writes a letter on behalf of Ambulance Victoria to those members who haven't provided permission for their new address details to be passed on. The letter advises them that Ambulance Victoria is interested in obtaining their new address and they are encouraged to contact the organisation by telephone or by returning an address slip in the enclosed Reply Paid envelope.

Membership analyst Gordon Stephen says: "With more than two million member records, and two million mail items sent each year, accurate data ensures that we get the best return for our marketing campaigns and that the retention process is working efficiently."

According to Gordon, the database management services have been a big asset in reducing the organisation's membership attrition rates. "We've definitely found members who could have been lost to us forever."

AUSTRALIA POST'S DATA HYGIENE SERVICES

SERVICE	HOW IT WORKS	BENEFITS
National Change of Address	Matches your database to data captured through Australia Post's Mail Redirection service to find the new address of customers who have moved and given consent for their new details to be forwarded.	Keeps customer addresses up to date, provides more accurate mailing with less return-to-sender mail and helps retain customers.
Re-Connect	Where customers haven't consented to having their details forwarded, Australia Post makes contact with customers on your behalf to help them re-connect with your business.	Re-establishes contact with lost customers, keeps customer addresses up to date and reduces return-to-sender mail.
Return-to-sender processing	Processes your return-to-sender mail to create a list of customers who need to be contacted to request updated address details.	Improves the accuracy of your database and saves time.
Address Notification	Enables Mail Redirection customers to select organisations that they want Australia Post to notify of their change of address details. Selection of organisations can be made via the website (www.movingsservices.com.au).	Provides an easy way for customers to pass on new address details.

For more information on any of these services contact First Direct Solutions, a division of Australia Post, on 1300 363 242. Or visit www.fdsolutions.com.au.