

Addressing:

Ensuring That Your Mailpiece Reaches its Destination

December 2010

*This is the fourth and final article summarizing key takeaways from the August 2010 Fineline University: **The Profits & Power of Direct Mail** and speaker Mary Ann Bennett of The Bennett Group.*

You've worked hard on the design and message of your mailpiece. Unfortunately, this doesn't mean it's necessarily going to reach its destination. Addressing your piece correctly can make or break the success of your campaign, because if it's not received or received on time, it's a wasted effort.

Knowing the Post Office's automated processing system will help you understand your options and best bets for addressing your mailpieces so they are delivered as quickly and accurately as possible. To this end, Mary Ann Bennett recommended these guidelines:

Barcodes

As Mary Ann mentioned in the List Hygiene Essentials session,* if there is one thing you can do to get your message delivered successfully and expeditiously, put a barcode on it. Barcoded mail gets processed more efficiently because it skips ahead directly to the Delivery Point Barcode Reader. This is much less labor-intensive on the USPS, so you receive postage discounts.

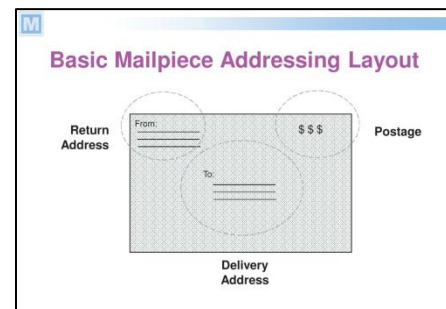
Mailpiece Address Layout

Address Layout (standard envelope)

Display address and postage information in the top left corner, top right corner, and center of your piece, creating a "Mickey Mouse ear" design. This is the most basic and reliable layout. (See diagram shown here.)

Address Layout (window envelope)

Make sure the delivery address is visible with a left/right margin of 1/8" and a top margin of 1/25". This will keep your mailer from failing the "tap" test. A tap test is administered to test if your address and barcode are visible through the window when the piece is tapped on the left, right, and bottom. If any part of your address disappears from the window, it is a failed test.



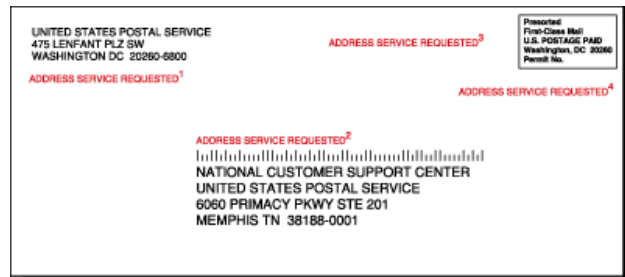
Ancillary Service Endorsements

You can add various Ancillary Service Endorsements (ASE’s) to assist the delivery of your mail and/or updating of your mailing list. Undeliverable-as-addressed mail is forwarded, returned to the sender, or treated as “dead mail” as authorized by that particular mail class.

There may be additional fees associated with the use of these ASE’s. Before you add an endorsement to your piece, make certain you understand the service you will receive and the fees that may be charged for the service.

- **Return Service Requested:** A mail piece is returned to the sender with the new address or reason for non-delivery.
- **Temporary Return Service Requested:** If temporary change-of-address has been filed, the mail piece will be forwarded. The sender is not notified of the change of address.
- **Address Service Requested:**
 - Months 1-12: the mail piece is forwarded and a notice is provided with the new address.
 - Months 13-18: the mail piece is returned with the new address attached.
 - After month 18: the mail piece is returned with reason for non-delivery.

You have four options for locations to place your ASE: directly below the return address, directly above your mailing address (above the barcode), to the left of your postage, or directly beneath your postage. (See diagram shown here.)



Address Format and Design

The success of your mailpiece’s deliverability truly lies in the address format and design. Mary Ann suggested that you take a good look at your mailer and compare it to these tips and guidelines from the Post Office:

1. **Use abbreviations, but do not use punctuation.** For example, “Street” becomes “St”. But, don’t abbreviate street names.
2. **List a suite, apartment, or building number above the street address.** The Post Office looks at the line of text above the city, state, and zip code first for delivery address information. If you have a dual address (PO Box and physical), list the mailing address on the line above the city, state, and zip code.
3. **The recipients’ job titles and/or departments are not pertinent information to deliverability.** This information can be left off from your address.

Did you know?

Use sans serif typefaces if your mailpiece is not barcoded.



4. **Use sans serif typefaces (e.g., Helvetica, Verdana, Arial, etc.) if your mailpiece is not barcoded.** Remember that *machines* are reading the address. It needs to be clearly printed on your mailer. (A good test is to draw a vertical line between the letters. If you cut-off any part of the text, you should rethink the font you are using. Tell your designer to not kern or nest and to avoid cursive.)
5. **Make sure your address stands out from the background.** Busy backgrounds and/or fonts with similar colors as the background are generally not a good idea. If a human cannot easily read the address, a machine probably can't as well.

Address standardization is not required by the Post Office, yet. As they continue its drive for automation, such as with intelligent mail barcodes, these guidelines will likely become regulation.

For more information, Mary Ann recommended the USPS Publication 28: Postal Addressing Standards. The PDF is on Fineline's Direct Mail Solutions web page at FinelinePrintingGroup.com/mailing.cfm.

We hope these articles have reminded you of key guiding principles of direct mail campaigns. Stay tuned for our next Fineline University in 2011.

**FinelinePrintingGroup.com/learn/article0910.pdf*