LET USPS MANAGE E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Email has become the predominant form of written communication for most Americans. Within the Direct/Interactive marketing community it has become the 'killer app'. Spam is the growing threat to business involved in Email and a giant pain to all consumers that are online.
Congressional committees are sharpening

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knives as they get ready to create legislation, that if put into action will strangle the newest marketing medium. What should be done?

The United States Post Office should step into the fray. Our USPS missed the boat on email and the Internet over a decade ago. Back then, a clearer vision would have given them a revenue stream as well as protecting consumers from spam. This article will not, as I have previously written, speak to the issue of revenue per email sent. There is a more vital role for the Post Office.

The controlling and issuing of permanent email addresses to all U.S. households and family members.

Think about our phone numbers. Depending upon where we live, we have a defined area code, a defined prefix and then four digits that are personal to the phone number itself. A number in Nassau County, NY could be 516-433-1234. That number places it in Nassau County, Jericho/Syosset and then the personal numeric.

Whether the person possessing that number uses MCI, Sprint, AT&T or a variety of other vendors the phone number will remain the same. It is transparent to the user or receiver as to which service is being employed.

Let the Post Office do the same for email and the 'net' in general.

Here is an example of how this could work. John Doe lives at 201 Broad Stream Road, Sarasota, Florida 34236-5604
The new standard email for Mr. Doe would be johnd@201bsr-fl236.usa

Of course, I am sure that the postal service can come up with a more creative standard than I have in this example. The zip four could certainly be used. My point is that email can be standardized by the service.

There are clear benefits to everyone to this becoming a reality. Except, the spammers, pornographers and fraudulent groups that prey through email.

Benefit one is that each individual in a family could register with the Post Office for their own address. At the Doe household, Mary, John Jr. and Peter can all have their own email addresses.

Plus, for an 'upcharge' they can have a family website: www.201bsr-fl236.usa, which each family member could add a personal page.

(There were probably more than one benefit above, but who is counting.)

Benefit two is that each household or email address could simply block non-usa (official post office) url's from their email bin. By simply using the filter on their email program, Spam from off shore would be eliminated.

Benefit three would allow the USPS Inspection service and other federal agencies to pursue domestic email abusers.

Benefit four would allow households and individuals to change service providers and still keep their email address.

Benefit five, Marketers would be able to target geographically as well as employing all the methodology of traditional direct marketing. This in itself would make emails received more relevant to the recipient and response margins and ROI more profitable.

Benefit six, remove requests would be honored through traditional suppress methods.

Benefit seven, would be that Change of Address and new Email address would be combined to allow for greater efficiencies to all concerned.

Businesses would have a choice, either the above Standard email or one that maintained their individual corporate url.

For all official government business, consumers and business alike would be required to use the Standard postal email address. Therefore, IRS communications and filings as well as banking and secure transactions with SEC institutions would all be through the new system.

Who would lose? Excluding the bad guys, the ISP's such as AOL, Earthlink and others stand to lose their branding via the url of the email address. This is a small price to end the blight of SPAM and add the benefits to consumers and marketers alike.

It furthermore allows the Post Office to become a source of renewed energy and services that will come from an agency that has been around since the beginning of the republic.

Globalization of legitimate emails from other countries can be combined into this program. Once again through the postal service. Discussions of this type of scenario are taking place. Lobbyists for different interests are not in favor of this program.

As direct marketers we should think about this or other consumer oriented email programs that will allow the medium to survive.

DM NEWS
EDITORIAL

How Would You Run the USPS?

Think you know how the U.S. Postal Service should run its operations? There's still time to send your comments to the presidential commission on postal reform. The deadline is Feb. 12. Views writer John Campanelli makes a case for why the USPS needs to simplify its rate case process, improve service and consolidate some facilities. Meanwhile, columnist Roy Schwedelson offers a more radical role for the USPS: To control and issue permanent e-mail addresses to all U.S. households and family members. This would benefit everyone, he writes, "except the spammers, pornographers and fraudulent groups that prey through e-mail" (see story). Comments should be sent to **pcusps_comments@do.treas.gov or to: Presidents Commission on the U.S. Postal Service, 1120 Vermont Ave. NW, Suite 971, Washington, DC 20005. Speak now or shut up later.**

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