

MTAC Workgroup 123
Service Information Needs, Reporting, and Communication Channels

September 8, 2008 Meeting Notes

Proposed Meeting Schedule

Becky Dobbins, USPS co-chair, reviewed the proposed meeting schedule for the next few weeks, which includes today's telecon, a telecon on Monday, Sept. 15 from 11:00 am EST - 12:00 noon EST; and an in-person meeting tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, September 24. Start time was briefly discussed, with some preferring an earlier start time to avoid other meetings scheduled for that day, and some preferring a later start time so that those wishing to travel in the morning of the meeting could do so. Ms. Dobbins will send out an e-mail with several options that workgroup members can vote on. She said the group could decide to add another in-person meeting in the next few weeks, but the USPS is trying to be sensitive to travel issues with participants and accomplish as much as possible by telecon.

Re-Cap of Last Meeting

Ms. Dobbins re-capped the activity from the last workgroup meeting, as outlined in the meeting notes. The group agreed that no changes to the meeting notes are necessary.

Industry Use of Service Data

At the last meeting, the group had agreed that industry participants would attempt to put together a one-page, easy to read, description of how their company today uses service performance data.

John Sexton, industry co-chair, submitted a one-page document for PSI, which he reviewed on the telecon. PSI currently uses both Planet Code and Intelligent Mail (IM) barcode data. He noted there were about 150 million Planet scans in last year's PSI database. [Note: Mr. Sexton provided the following updated information subsequent to the call: PSI has about 275 million First-Class Mail scans and 9 million Standard Mail for the year, ranging from 18 to 48 million for each USPS Area.] The primary use of the data is a customer web-based reporting system, which he noted was begun about 3-4 months ago. The system allows customers to access data on their own mailing information, including presort, volume, billing and service performance data; as well as aggregate information. The system produces robust reports for PSI operations centers as well as a subset of reports for specific customers.

Mr. Sexton said the data normally is analyzed from several different aspects, including a 12-months rolling average of service performance, with a calculated weighted USPS service standard. PSI's data is about 92% First-Class Mail, but also includes some Standard Mail. Aggregate data is available by PSI operations center, as well as total corporate performance numbers that can be broken down by USPS organization and PSI ops center. The user can select mail class, time frame, an individual PSI site or combination of factors. The data is normally available in about 3 days.

In response to question, Mr. Sexton said that PSI does not offer direct access to the system to USPS managers, but does routinely provide the USPS with reports. Although education has been needed with USPS managers in terms of how the system works and how the data is analyzed, Mr. Sexton said there is not normally an issue with the USPS accepting the validity/accuracy of the data.

Ms. Dobbins asked whether the exception reports show flags or color coding to identify problems, and Mr. Sexton said the deliverability exceptions report can use a variety of variables, often customer-specific, to identify problems. For instance, the variables could be mail that is more than two days beyond the service standard, where more than 25% of the mail destined there is more than two days late. Some of these reports are relatively new, he said, but are of great value in customer service.

The PSI data can be drilled down to the piece level, Mr. Sexton noted, and the data includes not only piece barcodes but PSI is starting to incorporate tray and pallet barcodes. There are some issues with the tray level data exchange with the USPS, but the potential is promising. On the pallet scans, he noted, there are still issues with the data and that is being worked in several MTAC workgroups.

Ms. Dobbins observed that the report formats used by PSI and many others are easy for USPS managers to understand. There used to be issues in the past, she noted, with mailers or service providers using a variety of report formats, many of which were difficult for the USPS to decipher. But in the last six years, most everything seems to be in formats that the USPS can understand. There appears to be more commonality in the way the data is represented.

In response to the question of how PSI deals with identifying problems beyond the District level, Mr. Sexton said it depends on the volume of mail between two points. If there is not much sheer volume (e.g., outliers), then PSI likely would pull data at the 3-digit level. The methodologies may not be scientific yet in terms of statistical validity, but as things move ahead there will be a broader base, he noted, since things are largely still in pilot mode.

Ms. Dobbins asked for a volunteer to present and discuss their data on next weeks' telecon, and Maureen Noe, Quad/Graphics, volunteered to do so.

Dennis Farley said that any workgroup participants interested in doing so can visit the Red Tag web site at <http://www.redtag.org> and click on "Consolidated Reports" on the top of page to see the reports available to the USPS from Red Tag. Ms. Siviter asked if these reports will change when the external measurement begins, and Mr. Farley said they will somewhat, and that Red Tag also will be providing information to the external reporting system for the USPS measurement system for Periodicals.

Ms. Dobbins noted that part of the USPS' dilemma with the Red Tag/DelTrak Periodicals information is the desire of users to have 5-digit ZIP Code information, but the need to preserve confidentiality of the external reporter system. The USPS will work through those issues as time goes on. Mr. Farley offered to provide the workgroup with a copy of the presentation on Red Tag used at other venues, or to present it at the Sept. 24 in-person meeting. He will provide a copy to the USPS for its review.

Wendy Smith noted that for parcels, the data reporting that currently comes from the USPS PTS system is not always consistent with data provided by PCH's consolidator. Because the consolidator is considered a USPS competitor, however, we cannot have them do a presentation. There reportedly are discrepancies between the USPS' EDW data and the consolidator's data, which causes about 50% of the mail to get dropped from USPS' reporting, she noted. Ms. Dobbins said that if the issue has been worked on before, we don't want to re-invent the wheel, however, it would be helpful to identify the causes for the discrepancies. Ms. Smith said she can itemize the discrepancies over a one month period as a starting point, and provide that information to the USPS within the next two weeks.

USPS Customer Inquiry Process

Ms. Dobbins noted that a representative from the Business Service Network (BSN) was unable to join the telecon today, but she offered to give a perspective from her experience as a District Manager in terms of the process the USPS follows on customer inquiries about service issues.

Maiers call or e-mail when they have issues with service, Ms. Dobbins reported, usually starting with the BSN representative at the local or Area level. If a response is received from the BSN quickly, the process is good. She noted that most of the BSN reps she has worked with personally have been very good, and they try to solve the problems as quickly as possible. If the problem is not resolved, the mailer will call the plant, District, and continue to escalate the issue all the way to Pat Donahoe if resolution is not achieved.

Ms. Siviter asked that when the BSN does give the group an update on the process, it could talk about the types of calls received and how they research the issue. For instance, PostCom gets calls from members asking whether other mailers are experiencing similar issues in terms of service (either by geography, time period, mail type, etc.). How does the USPS research these same types of issues?

Reports to the PRC

The USPS provided the workgroup participants with a brief description of the reports it will provide to the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) on service performance. Ms. Dobbins noted that only an annual report is required under the law, but the USPS will provide reports to the PRC on a quarterly basis to provide them with additional information, as they have requested. These reports will be posted on the USPS' web site (for market-dominant products) in an effort to support transparency/visibility.

Ms. Dobbins reviewed the handout describing the reports, noting that for First-Class Mail there will be separate reports for single-piece/Blue Box mail and presort/commercial mail. She said the USPS will share the performance targets for market-dominant products once its Board of Governors has approved them. If there are too many holes in the data for Standard Mail at the District level, Ms. Dobbins noted, the USPS will share that information at the Area level because it prefers a more robust number rather than a 20 point variance. There should be plenty of data, she said, and the USPS will be looking at that throughout the quarter. The challenge is statistical validity, and between some 3-digit ZIP Code pairs, there is not as much volume.

For Package Services, she noted, the data for each class of mail will get rolled into that report (e.g., First-Class Mail parcel data will be included in the First-Class Mail reports, etc.). In response to question, she said that at some point in the future, the USPS may publish separate reports for commercial and retail Package Services.

Action Items

The following list represents new action items added from today's telecon, as well as those still pending from the prior meeting.

| New or Pending | Action Item | Assigned To |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|
| New | Send out e-mail with potential times for Sept 24 meeting date | Becky Dobbins, USPS |

| New or Pending | Action Item | Assigned To |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------|
| New | Provide a copy of the Red Tag presentation for potential discussion at the Sept. 24 meeting | Dennis Farley |
| New | Provide the USPS with a list of the types of discrepancies over a one month period between the USPS' EDW data and DelCon data from PCH's consolidator. | Wendy Smith |
| New | The Business Service Network, when describing its customer inquiry process, will include the types of service calls received and how it researches/diagnoses the issue for response to the customer. | BSN |
| New | Provide the USPS with additional agenda items for upcoming meetings | All participants |
| Pending | Workgroup participants will submit to the co-chairs a one-page, easy to read, simple outline of their recommendations in terms of what they want from service performance measurement that they do not get today. | All industry participants |
| Pending | Workgroup participants will review the roster when they receive it to identify any participation gaps in terms of industry segments that should be encouraged to participate. | All participants |

Next Meeting

The next meeting is a telecon to be held on Monday, September 15, 2008, from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon EST. Items not discussed on the agenda sent for the September 8 meeting will be added to the agenda for the Sept. 15th meeting. In addition, workgroup participants should e-mail any requested agenda items to the co-chairs.

Agenda items remaining from today's call, which will be taken up on the Sept 15 call, include:

- What's Needed by the Industry
- Industry Reports
- BSN Customer Inquiry Process (from the BSN)
- Proposed Subjects for September 24th Meeting