

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

September 15, 2008 Meeting Notes

Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

Tim Gribben, USPS, reviewed of the September 8, 2008, meeting minutes. There were no additions or corrections to the minutes.

Review of QUAD Measurement Data

Maureen Noe, QUAD/Graphics, gave an overview of the service measurement data collected and used by Quad. [A copy of the slide presentation for this discussion was distributed to workgroup participants prior to the meeting.]

Quad currently uses two service measurement tools: one using Confirm data (Planet codes) and one using seed data (reporters). Ms. Noe noted that today Quad does not use IM barcode scans, but plans to do so in the future. The Planet codes used by Quad today are pieces all using the same code. Quad does not provide its customers with mailing-specific data, and does not hold aggregate Confirm data, but plans to do so in the future.

Quad provides two summary reports to its customers, one by state which includes the percent of pieces destined to the state with final scan data and scans per day; and one grouped by entry point Quad drops to with the number of pieces mailed, the number of scanable pieces and the percent of final scans received. Ms. Noe said that currently these tools do not include the ability to drill down to the 3-digit, 5-digit or piece level, but may do so in the future. Today, Quad does not keep individual scan data in its system.

Ms. Noe said that it would be helpful to have data grouped by USPS District, and Quad could change its reports to match the USPS District or Area levels, but that data on a postal facility level would be helpful to see how that facility is moving the mail. Facility-level data would be helpful for customers and also for the USPS to see where problems are occurring, she suggested.

Quad uses Confirm tracking for its clients to help them predict in-home delivery windows, and also identify locations where mail is not moving. If scans are not seen when they should be, according to the USPS' service standards, Quad will contact those postal facilities on behalf of its clients and work with the USPS BSN reps to try to locate the mail and get it moving. Quad also sends final scan reports to USPS managers as FYI.

Ms. Noe reported that Quad does not have a wide variety of clients using the Confirm tracking tool today, but said Quad only started using Confirm about a year ago. Catalogers were not seeing a real value in Confirm, so using the tool takes some

convincing. Quad focuses customers on the ability to react to predicted in-home delivery dates for a mailing.

Quad also has a seed tracking program, which has been in place for over 18 years. This program is mostly Standard Mail flats, with occasionally some Package Services or Periodicals. The data is available on a mailing-specific basis, as well as an aggregated basis. Quad has about 800 seed reporters nationwide. The aggregate data provides the number of days to delivery at postal facilities (when seeds receive the piece). Quad tries to focus on SCFs where consistently late delivery is seen. Ms. Noe said that the seed reports are not adequate on their own to determine problems, but they act as a trigger for further exploration.

The seed data can be drilled down to the package type, pallet, city/state ZIP, and actual name/address of the seed when necessary.

Ms. Noe said that the Confirm tracking data is seen as the most useful, but client adoption is slow. Confirm provides much more data and coverage, she said, but clients need to embrace it.

In response to question, Ms. Noe said that Quad uses FAST appointment data for the start-the-clock for its measurement tools, but then audits that information against what is provided by its third-party carriers. For discrepancies between FAST and the carrier, she said, Quad uses the FAST information. Todd Black noted that Time often uses its carrier data because there can be hours of delay in unload times. The USPS clarified that both the arrival time and the unload time should be reflected in the FAST data. Ms. Noe said Quad uses the later time to give the USPS the benefit of the doubt, and its measurement is normally in the number of days with the arrival day not counted since a post-CET time is assumed.

She noted, again in response to question, that Quad does charge for its Confirm tracking tool, but the cost is minimal. The big obstacle to client adoption is the space needed on the piece for the Planet code. Once clients move to IM barcodes and space is not as much issue, then more clients may be interested. Quad's client base is primarily flats, she noted, with not as many letter mailers. While clients vary in size, the larger tend to use Confirm, and even then it can be a small percentage of the mailing because it can be up to 80 percent carrier route.

Ms. Dobbins said that the USPS will put together a comparison grid showing what workgroup members are doing in terms of measurement data. To that end, it would be helpful to get more one-page summaries from the workgroup members prior to the September 24 meeting.

Review of Red Tag Measurement Data

Dennis Farley, ESPN, gave the group an overview of the Red Tag service measurement system, which tracks delivery of Periodicals participants. Red Tag is a not-for-profit

organization made up of Periodicals publishers, and its sole purpose is to monitor and improve the delivery of its member publications. It has been in existence for over 38 years. [A copy of the slide presentation for this discussion was distributed to workgroup participants prior to the meeting.]

Red Tag currently includes over 56 publications sent to over 22.7 million readers, consisting of nearly 800 million pieces of Periodicals mailed per year. Publication circulations vary from under 5,000 to over 3 million, and include dailies, weeklies, bi-weeklies and monthlies, as well as both consumer and business-to-business publications. Delivery addresses include both business and residential.

The Red Tag monitoring system in 2007 included over 1,300 monitors (seeds). The monitoring system provides raw data for individual publication members by monitor and cover date, as well as analysis against USPS service standards by monitor, entry point, USPS Area and USPS destination District. Mr. Farley emphasized that consolidated reports are available to participants, the USPS, and anyone that wants them. The consolidated reports include aggregate data from all participating publications by frequency, by entry point, by destination ZIP or District, and include analysis against USPS service standards.

Red Tag monitors can report delivery by phone or by using the Red Tag web site. Mr. Farley showed examples of screens available to monitors for reporting. Red Tag utilizes a monitoring manager that works with publishers to select monitors, solicits monitors, adds/deletes monitors as requested, and reviews monitor performance.

Mr. Farley showed examples of the publication-specific reports available from Red Tag, as well as consolidated reports. Consolidated reports can be accessed by going to the Public Area on the Red Tag web site (<http://www.redtag.org>). In addition, he offered to provide the workgroup participants with a temporary password to access ESPN's publication-specific reports.

The Red Tag data is actionable and timely, Mr. Farley noted. He said he often goes in to the system on a Friday or Saturday to look at delivery reported for issues dropped at the SCF on Thursday. He can see how many sites are not yet reporting delivery. If a facility is having late delivery two or more weeks in a row, he will contact the USPS plant manager first and then the BSN representative if necessary.

Red Tag is working with the USPS and its external measurement contractor to collect and provide measurement data for Periodicals, along with Time's DelTrak system. Mr. Farley noted, however, that Red Tag's member consensus is that even if there is another system available, they would continue to participate in Red Tag because it is a very inexpensive way to monitor delivery and a proven system that works, providing data immediately.

Mr. Black noted that although some may see systems like Red Tag and DelTrak as not being statistically valid, there have never been cases where delivery problems reported by the system are found to be inaccurate.

In response to question, Mr. Farley said the Red Tag system uses the publisher-entered arrival times at postal facilities (which are provided by their carriers) as the start-the-clock for measurement. ESPN compared its FAST data to the carrier data and while times may vary, the dates never vary, so the carrier times are used. For the reports that analyze the data against the USPS service standards, the updated standards are used, except for CETs, which are not yet available. Red Tag uses an arbitrary CET of 1700 hours today. Mr. Black reported that Time also uses carrier-provided data for start-the-clock, and their dates never conflict with FAST.

Mr. Farley said the USPS is smart to build a Periodicals measurement system using both DelTrak and Red Tag because they are both great systems. DelTrak includes many entry points and high volumes, and Red Tag includes larger publications but also smaller weekly publications with less entry points, high CR presort and sacked mail. The combined data should provide a good picture of Periodicals service, he said.

BSN Service Resolution Process

At the last meeting, the workgroup had asked the USPS to give an update on the process used by its Business Service Network (BSN) representatives to follow-up on service issues.

Charles Mancuso, USPS BSN Manager for the New York Metro Area, gave an update on the BSN process. [A handout was prepared and distributed to workgroup participants prior to the meeting.]

The USPS currently has 80 centers with BSNs, not including 9 Area offices and the headquarters BSN group. The BSN is dedicating to providing service to USPS managed account customers for resolution of service issues and information requests. The BSN representatives link with other USPS groups to respond to customers. The BSN uses a database, CustomerFirst, which it shares with the USPS sales organization, to record and manage customer contacts and service issues.

If a customer has an information request or service problem, BSN reps around the country input the requests into the database. This creates accountability, Mr. Mancuso noted, which was not always done years past before the BSN and system were implemented. He noted this is an important feature of the BSN and is fundamental to the way it operates because it keeps issues from falling through the cracks. In the past, customers were not always called back or responded to, and no one took accountability. While that still occasionally happens today, he noted, the system largely eliminates that possibility.

The BSN rep takes the information from the customer in any way they may provide it – by phone, e-mail, fax, personal visits and E-Service BSN. Communications, both inbound and outbound, are a core process for the BSN to manage, Mr. Mancuso noted. BSNs respond to the customer, striving for a 24-hour maximum turnaround time. Sometimes that response may simply acknowledge the customer request and that the work is in progress. Feedback provided to the USPS by Gallup and other satisfaction measures indicate that the process is successful.

The CustomerFirst system sends BSN reps reminders to contact customers, and only the BSN rep that initiated the record can mark it as completed. In addition to handling service issues, BSN reps also provide customers with proactive tips and tools, updates on new products and service offerings, and other information. The BSN also monitors service impacts from events such as the recent hurricanes. The BSN is supported by an extensive number of people throughout the Postal Service, Mr. Mancuso reported, including the internal subject matter experts that allow the BSN to do the best for its customers.

The BSN offers a one-on-one approach, he said, focusing on building relationships and knowing customer issues and needs. Understanding the customer's business is a target area for the BSN, he said, but the BSN does not try to replace existing networks between the customer and USPS.

In response to the question of how the BSN investigates service issues, Mr. Mancuso said if a customer reports a problem in Portland, Maine, for instance, the originating BSN would contact the BSN that handles Portland. The specifics from the original report are entered into CustomerFirst, and an electronic activity is created that is electronically routed to the BSN in Portland for response. The BSN in Portland would investigate delivery through a customer support team including the plant manager, and respond back through CustomerFirst so that the originating BSN can provide the customer with an update.

Kathy Siviter asked what the process would be if the mail was not drop shipped, where the problem could occur at different points between the origin entry and delivery unit. Mr. Mancuso said that then the investigation would become wider. In some cases, upcoming mailings may be coordinated with the customers and tracked to trap mail and find out where delays are occurring. Ms. Siviter asked what data systems the BSN might use to identify where service problems are occurring. Mr. Mancuso said that at times the customer may provide Confirm data which the USPS can use. In addition, USPS internal systems are being refined so that the BSN can access the data warehouse. In many cases, however, there is no tracking mechanism today, so it takes lots of hands on to identify and resolve service issues, he noted.

Ms. Siviter asked if at a future meeting the USPS could present information on the data systems it has in place today to provide service measurement, as well as those it envisions having in place in the future, for its internal use. John Sexton asked for a flow chart that

shows the BSN process from the point of customer contact, to include potential support areas, etc.

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	The USPS will put together a comparison grid showing what workgroup members are doing in terms of measurement data.	Becky Dobbins
New	The USPS at a future meeting will present information on the data systems it has in place today to provide service measurement, as well as those it envisions having in place in the future, for its internal use.	Becky Dobbins
New	The USPS will provide a flow chart that shows the BSN process for investigating service issues from the point of customer contact, to include potential support areas, etc.	Charles Mancuso
Pending	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
Pending	Provide the USPS with additional agenda items for upcoming meetings	All participants
Pending – need ASAP	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 workgroup meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 24, 2008, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:45 pm (EST) and will be held in person for those that can attend) at USPS

headquarters, room 1P629. Ms. Dobbins noted that because of financial cut backs, the USPS will not provide lunch, however some refreshments will be provided.

The meeting room will be open at 9:30 a.m. for a “meet and greet” with the meeting beginning promptly at 10:00 a.m. EST, and working straight through with adjournment around 1:30 - 1:45 pm EST. Telecon connectivity will also be provided for those who cannot attend in person.

Suggested agenda items include:

- Re-cap of workgroup progress to date
- Volunteers to present to the USPS what customers would like the USPS to provide in terms of measurement data. Each presenter will have 20 minutes, plus a short time for Q&A. The following volunteered to present (send e-mail to Ms. Dobbins and Mr. Sexton ASAP if you would like to volunteer):
 - Kathy Siviter, PostCom
 - Todd Black, Time Inc.
 - Ty Taylor, JCP (cannot attend, but will provide info)
 - Rich Porras and Wendy Smith will coordinate someone to do a parcels presentation
- USPS will attempt to provide a comparison matrix
- USPS presentation on its vision for future for BSN/customer inquiries on service issues
- USPS field training/education on interpreting/using measurement data
- USPS presentation on internal tracking systems it is using (e.g., Confirm) to monitor performance

Any other agenda suggestions should be sent to Ms. Dobbins and Mr. Sexton. A draft agenda will be sent out for review prior to the meeting.