

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

October 14, 2008 Meeting Notes

Opening

Becky Dobbins noted that the minutes from the Sept. 24 meeting have been distributed, and the minutes from the Sept. 30 meeting will soon follow. Any revisions or corrections should be sent to Ms. Dobbins by e-mail. Ms. Dobbins reported that Larry Chaido was not available today to discuss the international mail service performance needs, but he will do so on the October 21st telecon.

Parcel Issues

Ms. Dobbins reported that a separate discussion with parcel workgroup members was held. Wendy Smith, Publishers Clearing House, gave a quick update from the discussion.

Ms. Smith said that parcel user workgroup members have different needs and interests from service performance measurement data and that the reporting systems, and processing equipment systems also are different. The telecon discussion with parcel users included three main topics – reports; data parcel users get from the USPS' web site; and communication channels.

Parcel users get reports from the USPS' EDW system today for competitive services, she noted, and would like to use that as a basis for market dominant parcels. Industry is comfortable with the data and reports, but more detail is needed. There also are integrity issues that need to be addressed. The EDW report shows data broken out by entry level, with the percent delivered with in the standard and out to 8+ days.

Enhancements that parcel users would like to see include a break out by parcel type, and Ms. Smith noted that the USPS said that will happen by month's end, which is good news for parcel users. Other enhancements would include the ability to have reports run at the mailer level and also at aggregate level so that parcel users that do not use DelCon/barcodes can have access to how the USPS is performing compared to the applicable service standard.

Ms. Smith also noted that there are issues with data integrity that need further exploration. Up to 60% of data is not being included today and the parcel users want to discuss with the USPS how to improve the data integrity and include more data in the reporting. Also, today reports are run by BSN managers and parcel users would prefer that mailers have the ability to run the reports themselves. There used to be an external interface for customers, which hopefully can be provided again in the future, she noted.

As general information, Parcel Select users can go to a USPS web site, pull down PTS data – which is raw data for all scans for a given parcel – then the users can slice and dice the data as they need. Ms. Smith said that seems to be working well, although perhaps there is a question of what data is not being included. Is there any filtering by USPS of the data for inclusion?

Ms. Smith noted that many parcel mailers don't seem familiar with the BSN tool. Parcel users with PTS data go to their BSN to work issues and normally are able to resolve them, but a more formalized process should be put in place. Parcel users want to understand how the USPS will monitor parcel performance (using what data, what reports), to ensure everyone is looking at the same data and drawing the same conclusions.

Ms. Dobbins reported that the USPS has assigned Angie Burns, Bob Fisher, Don Mallonee, and Juliaan Hess to work with the parcel users. Mr. Mallonee will be the primary contact with Ms. Hess as back-up.

Ms. Hess said that some of the data parcel users seem to be looking for may already be provided in USPS reports. She will review what's available to see if it seems to meet the needs expressed and get back with the parcel users group. If there are gaps, new requirements would need to be written. Ms. Smith said the parcel users group would be interested in seeing what the USPS might have already available so that we are not re-inventing the wheel.

Potential Data Search Parameters

Todd Black presented a draft spreadsheet he has developed that breaks out the type of information needed and desired format for service performance data by industry function (e.g., fulfillment, mail preparer, drop shipper, data services, mail owner, etc.). He noted that the spreadsheet is not complete, simply an idea that could be more fleshed out by the workgroup. The USPS will send the spreadsheet out to the workgroup participants.

Mr. Black said the "Needs Summary" tab of the spreadsheet identifies who the business stakeholders are (i.e., business function). Time, Inc. wears multiple hats, he noted, so it may have business needs that spread across business function. For instance, his company has fulfillment needs (e.g., customer complaint calls from subscribers); mail preparer needs, drop shipper needs, and third party needs. He said that there may be other business functions that should be added, and encouraged the workgroup participants to review the information and add to it if this is a direction the group would like to take.

Angelo Anagnostopoulos asked where co-mail or co-palletization business needs would be reflected, and Mr. Black said it could be under mail preparer or drop shipper, or both. He said the focus of the spreadsheet was to identify business functions rather than company types. The needs might be specific to the type of mail preparer.

Mr. Black then reviewed the other two tabs on the spreadsheet. The 2nd tab, "Stock Measurement" shows a web-based system that provides users with a graphical line chart representation of stock performance. The system provides drop down tools that the user can use to customize their information, as well as functionality to create custom reports that can be pulled by the user on a regular basis. This is an example, Mr. Black said, of how other companies that make available a lot of aggregate data might do so. It presents the data at aggregate level, but then allows the user to click on and pick portions of the data. The categories shown on this site are not relevant to our industry, however, but the third tab shows what something tailored for our industry could look like.

The third tab, "Performance Measurement," shows the same type of data view, but with drop down menus relevant to our business. So a user could graph all Single Piece FCM as a whole, for example, but then have the ability to select the data by Area, District, class of mail, etc. Categories that we know will be in the data being obtained from IM barcodes. The tab shows just examples of what is in the data and possible functionality. On the right, the user can create custom measurements. If the logon-ID were user-specific, the user could also do custom searches for their mailings only.

Mr. Black stressed that presenting this type of system and functionality does not mean that Time or any other mail owner is in support of paying additional postage/fees for such a system. It shows what a data-rich environment would enable both the USPS and industry to have.

Jody Berenblatt asked if “web-based” on the first tab means that just data is wanted, or raw data with push/pull access, meaning no reports are desired. Mr. Black said that web-based would present the aggregate data. There could be two separate reporting environments – one web-based and the other with raw data which some businesses would want push/pull access (e.g., for researching specific customer complaint calls, etc.).

Ms. Dobbins said USPS will work on a similar format for its data and have that for the October 21 telecon, then the group can work off that to make enhancements or modifications. Mr. Black stressed that the summary is preliminary and needs input from others in the group. Ms. Dobbins asked that other industry reps fill in the gaps and bring back the information next week.

Customer Report Examples

Ms. Dobbins shared with the group the USPS’ comparison of business customer needs, based on the one-page feedback synopsis shared by workgroup participants. Across the top, the information is broken out by the predominant mail category for the business (e.g., FCM letters, FCM flats, Standard Mail letters, etc.). The information then is broken out by the desired location (e.g., national, Area, District, SCF, 3-digit, 5-digit, etc.); time period (e.g., shipment, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.); and performance indicator (e.g., percent on-time delivery, % late delivery, % early delivery, etc.).

Ms. Berenblatt suggested the group needs to re-focus on its objectives and not get pushed into completing a specific format. While the spreadsheet is good work, she said, it should not need to be done. The purpose of the workgroup was not to do another temperature read on what business customers want. The desired results of the workgroup are to identify how we can exchange actionable data, what level of granularity is needed to have a positive, effective communication, and identify what systems the USPS currently deploys that could be retired. How does this effort get us there, she asked? Taking a poll at any one point in time is not the best way to serve the USPS and entities dependent on it in terms of managing actionable data.

Ms. Dobbins said that the USPS needs to know what business customers want in terms of the data in order to consider design requirements. There would be a different priority for one set of data than for 5-digit ZIP code level data, for instance. Ms. Berenblatt said the only reason to care about data by District is because the USPS forces customers to have the data in that manner in order to have an effective dialog. The USPS also requires 5-digit data to act on any communication from her company, she noted, which the company does solely in hopes that it will help solve the service issues. She said that if we build a system that does not include 5-digit ZIP code level data, we will have failed because the USPS will not be able to effect the communication.

Ms. Dobbins said that 5-digit ZIP Code data on an ongoing basis is a huge amount of data. The 3-digit level already includes over 800,000 pairs. Ms. Berenblatt reiterated that she believes 5-digit data is what is required from the customer in order to obtain the service resolution from the USPS.

Kathy Siviter asked what the USPS is planning to build for itself in terms of an internal service performance diagnostic system. Doesn’t it make more sense for the USPS to let us know what it already plans to build for its own internal use, how it will be able to slice and dice the data to identify and resolve service issues and reduce costs, etc. Then the discussion should focus on what level of business customer access to what portion(s) of that system is necessary for us to work together to resolve service issues and allow business customers to better manage their businesses.

Ms. Dobbins said that is coming in a future presentation.

Mr. Black agreed with Ms. Berenblatt that business customers are asked by USPS managers for 5-digit ZIP Code level data.

Don Mallonee said the USPS needs to know how long business customers think the data should be maintained and at what level. For instance, 5-digit ZIP Code level data might be rolled up into a higher level report, then no longer maintained. Or it might be available for some time to the field, but not for an unspecified period of time. Mr. Black said that data storage, processing and distribution needs all contribute to the costs. How should we interpret what Tom Day shared in terms of the capitol for the hardware the USPS is purchasing to support the IM infrastructure, he asked.

Ms. Dobbins said that system is to support Full Service IMb production. The plan is not to store the data extensively for any length of time. It's one thing to have the hardware, she said, it's another to process, push and store the data.

The group suggested that definitions be discussed for how long the data needs to be stored. Customers that wanted the data for a longer period would have to download and retain it themselves. Ms. Berenblatt noted that it can take 30 days for a customer complaint call to occur, so the data cannot be accessible for just 10 days, for instance. One suggestion was that if the storage of the data would be limited, data for pieces that failed to meet the service standards could be stored longer. Ms. Dobbins said that Standard Mail data would need to be stored longer than First-Class Mail data because the service standards are longer.

Ms. Siviter suggested the group also discuss what IM scan data is needed. Is it every possible type of IM scan (e.g., piece level, unit level, container level, etc.), or just Start and Stop the clock scans? Does it vary by the business customer need?

Ms. Dobbins said the USPS will invite an IT person to participate on the workgroup because reality may be different than the wish list – not that there are boundaries on anything being discussed, she noted, but issues should be put out on the table first.

JCP Summary Reports

Ty Taylor shared J. C. Penney's Area, District, and Facility summary report formats with the group. He said that USPS managers want the data in a format they can understand (e.g., mirroring USPS' organizational structure). The USPS would drill down within the data to determine the process for inquiries on service issues. Ms. Dobbins asked the group for feedback on the report.

Mr. Black said it is similar to other report formats used by seed programs. It's important, he stressed, to quantify early and late delivery. If mail is one day late, it typically indicates a systemic national issue, whereas a 2-3 day late trend generally identifies a more regional geographic problem.

Ms. Dobbins noted the down side of this format is that an Area or District may average 90-100%, but then specific facilities or subsets that are significantly lower in terms of performance may not stand out.

Mr. Black said a gap in their current external measurement systems providing data to the USPS is that they are not weighted. For instance, there are certain ZIP Code areas where the demographics of residents make them poor seed reporters. For instance, in Manhattan, residents tend to travel regularly and not be home for days at a time, which makes them poor reporters. Mr. Black noted that the service performance measurement reporting

that will be done for Quarter 1 is not being weighted. To that end, the data then is not as accurate as scan data or actual copies being mailed.

Next Steps

Ms. Dobbins said the meeting next week will include a presentation on international mail. She will work on the IT report/format, and mirror with Mr. Black’s postal requirements spreadsheet. Anyone that wants to weigh in on the spreadsheet is welcome to provide feedback.

John Sexton encouraged other workgroup participants to weigh in and provide feedback so we can get a better picture of the data elements.

Ms. Dobbins said the notes from the September 30 meeting will be distributed later today.

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
Pending	The USPS will check on the status of plans to continue distribution of the service standards disk tool.	USPS
Pending	The USPS will review and respond to the list provided by PCH showing the types of discrepancies over a one month period between the USPS’ EDW data and DelCon data from PCH’s consolidator.	USPS
Pending	The USPS will put together a comparison grid showing what workgroup members are doing in terms of measurement data.	Becky Dobbins
Pending	The USPS at a future meeting will present information on the data systems it envisions having in place in the future, for its internal use.	Becky Dobbins
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 meeting is a telecon scheduled for Tuesday, October 21, from 12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m. EST. In addition, the following future meeting schedule has been set up:

Tues., October 21, 2008	Telecon 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm EST
Thurs., October 30, 2008	Telecon 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 pm EST
Wed., November 5, 2008	Telecon 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm EST
Wed., November 12, 2008	Telecon 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm EST
Tues., November 18, 2008	In-Person/Telecon 1:00 pm EST (Room 2P310, USPS hq)