

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

January 6, 2009 Meeting Notes

Parcel Group

Brad Obert reported the parcel group has reviewing the USPS' draft comments, putting them into recommendations. Becky Dobbins, USPS co-chair, said she would like to put all the draft pieces together for next week's telecon into one document if possible. She asked if the parcel group has any concerns to raise with the larger group, and Mr. Obert said none at this time.

BSN Update

Angie Burns, BSN, said the BSN group has no additional update to report this week. Ms. Dobbins asked if the BSN will have a final draft ready soon and Ms. Burns said it should be ready by the end of the week. Ms. Dobbins reiterated that she needs all documents by COB on Friday, January 9, but anything ready sooner would be appreciated.

Rich Porras asked what format should be used for the drafts, and Ms. Dobbins said the group should follow the format used by MTAC Workgroup 114 in its final report, although our report certainly won't be as long. If anyone needs another copy of the WG 114 report, contact Ms. Dobbins. Several workgroup participants asked for a copy. Ms. Dobbins noted that the format had a front summary section, then individual sections outlining the recommendations. She said the report and format were excellent.

Short Term Deliverables

Bob Fisher reported that he is working on the draft of the short-term deliverables, including the data elements for service reporting. Comments are needed by Friday so that all participants' input can be incorporated. Ms. Dobbins said that many participants have been working with Mr. Fisher to supply a wealth of information to form the short term recommendations and finalize the long term report.

Other Systems

Ms. Dobbins briefly reviewed a paper providing short descriptions of the ADVANCE and ePubWatch systems, as requested at the last meeting. Both of these systems are heavily used, she noted, and there are big differences between them. The shortness of the paper is no reflection on the value of these systems, she stressed. The bottom line recommendation in the draft is that both systems continue to be in place until the IM system is fully in place. After that time, a subsequent review should be considered.

There are about 200 fairly aggressive users of the ADVANCE system, Ms. Dobbins reported. She said there is some concern that the system depends on recognition of mailpieces and some are more memorable than others. Ms. Siviter said that the users recognize it is not a perfect system, but it is the only game in town for their mail and until an IM solution is developed and deployed, ADVANCE should continue to be available. She noted that during MTAC Workgroup 114, the USPS gave an in-depth presentation on ADVANCE which was very educational and that some outside validation had been done that proved the system was credible in terms of its data. Ms. Dobbins asked for a

copy of the presentation if still available, which she will distribute on request to workgroup members.

There are about 11,000 companies, most fairly small, using the ePubWatch system. The latter usually starts with a lack of receipt of a Periodical.

Ms. Dobbins asked workgroup participants to review the draft and provide comments as soon as possible.

Strategic Vision for Long-Term Deliverables (Aggregate data)

Ms. Dobbins noted some feedback provided by workgroup participants since the last meeting on the draft aggregate data paper. Some have noted that the value of data decreases with its age, and Ms. Berenblatt provided feedback on the 5-digit data level section on page 2. Ms. Dobbins asked if anyone knew what her specific concerns were, and Ms. Siviter said that her guess would be that as long as the USPS requires customers to provide service data at the 5-digit level in order to have discussions on service issues, access to that data is needed by customers, but that because of the cost implications perhaps that data only need be available on an exception basis in case of service failures.

Ms. Siviter said that she thinks there has been some confusion about what customers want for aggregate data versus customer-specific data. Near real-time access is desirable for customer-specific data, she noted, but not for aggregate data. She reminded the group that on a prior call a discussion took place where participants had agreed aggregate data available on a monthly basis likely would meet their needs, but discussion on what that data would include were still ongoing. Similarly, data at the 5-digit level is not needed for aggregate data, but is needed for customer-specific data.

Ms. Siviter suggested the USPS do a simple e-mail survey to all workgroup participants asking about their needs from aggregate data and from customer-specific data. At this point, Ms. Berenblatt joined the meeting, and agreed that we need to clarify aggregate data access frequency and contents.

Mr. Sexton said that there should be an objective cost analysis before any of the workgroup recommendations are implemented. Ms. Berenblatt asked about a number she had read in the PRC's USO study that service performance measurement costs for the USPS were \$182 million (page 135 of the PRC's USO report). She would like to better understand where the number comes from and since this workgroup is the only venue for these discussions, is raising it here. Mr. Sexton agreed it would help give some measure to things we are asking for in terms of cost implications.

Ms. Dobbins was not familiar with the number, but said some costs could be associated with the expansion of EXFC. Other costs are investments software changes, scanning devices, etc. Some of these changes have already occurred. Ms. Siviter said that it is likely that many of the costs are not directly attributable to service performance measurement because they are costs of system changes that support other functions as well. Ms. Dobbins agreed that the IM system does much more than measurement, although that is a chunk of it.

Diane Monaco, PRC, said the number may have come from the USO report on page 120, table 1, where the PRC's contractor, George Mason University, said that if the service performance measurement mandate were eliminated, the USPS' profits would increase by \$182 million. Ms. Siviter said that the statement should not be taken on its surface without further exploring where that number is derived from. As stated earlier, there are many costs that are not solely related to enabling measurement as identified in the new law. Ms. Dobbins acknowledged that the USPS has not been able to quantify the costs attributable only to measurement.

On the issue of the cost of measurement, Ms. Siviter reminded the group that during MTAC Workgroup 114, the International Post Corporation (IPC), of which the USPS is a member, gave a presentation that, among other things, said that measurement methodologies can differ depending on the level of performance being achieved. In this way, costs can be minimized because less rigorous methodologies may be adequate to monitor service when it routinely is good. There was a short discussion of this issue since some felt that measurement methods should be consistent regardless of service levels.

Other Issues

Ms. Dobbins said that initially she had thought this workgroup's recommendations could ride along with other requirements for system changes, but with the state of the economy and impact on the USPS and its customers, that likely cannot happen now.

Ms. Smith raised a concern from the parcel group that came up in its last discussion. The parcel users had asked what reporting is being used by the USPS internally right now for market-dominant parcels and no one was sure. This ties to the industry's desire to have reporting by shape. Will the USPS have any diagnostic data specific to market dominant parcels? She noted a comment from USPS that it had a target of by the end of 2010 for separate reporting. Ms. Berenblatt asked if that is FY 2010 or calendar year 2010, and no one was sure.

Ms. Siviter expressed disappointment with the fact that the USPS did not publish its performance targets for market-dominant products in its annual report, with the exception of First-Class Mail – which apparently applies to all FCM. She officially asked Ms. Dobbins to follow-up on behalf of the workgroup on the status of the targets and why they have not been published. Ms. Dobbins said she will attempt to do so and can say the targets are aggressive.

Ms. Berenblatt asked whether the FCM targets apply to the tail of the mail and how it will be reported. Ms. Dobbins recapped the two public reports that will be provided; one of which reports the percent on-time for overnight, 2-day and 3+-day, and the other reports delivery to the standard +1 day, +2 days and +3 or more days. Ms. Berenblatt asked what the report would look like if the target is exceeded? If the goal is 96% for instance, and the actual performance is 98%, would it show that? (Yes, it will.) Ms. Berenblatt asked Mr. Nix to take the targets and show how actual performance could play out, which he agreed to do.

Ms. Dobbins said the USPS understands that industry is concerned about the tail of the mail, and the PRC will be providing a comment period on the reporting aspects some time soon.

Ms. Siviter asked if the customer satisfaction survey data referenced in the USPS' Annual Compliance Report for 2008 could be tied to service performance. For instance, only 85% or so percent of respondents rated Standard Mail Good, Very Good or Excellent. Is there supporting data from the surveys to determine whether the customer satisfaction was impacted by perceived or real service issues? Ms. Dobbins stressed that customer satisfaction is not necessarily tied to actual service performance, and that data is not available in the 2008 ACR, but could be included in future years.

Ms. Siviter thanked the USPS for setting up a new Modern Service Standards page on its web site, but pointed out that the simple charts showing the standards are still missing. She will send an e-mail offline with samples of the charts from USPS MTAC presentation slides.

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	Ms. Dobbins will develop and send out a simple e-mail survey to workgroup participants asking their needs from aggregate and customer-specific data.	Becky Dobbins
Pending	Workgroup members to provide Mr. Fisher with comments on draft document concerning shared/exchanged data elements.	Industry Participants
Pending	Workgroup members to review Strategic Vision for Long-Term Deliverables (Aggregate data) prepared by USPS and provide comments to Ms. Dobbins.	Industry Participants
Pending	Subgroup to put together list of criteria for USPS reporting data on potential delivery delays at a more granular level than disaster reporting provided today via RIBBS	Subgroup
Pending	Workgroup participants that use service performance data systems today should advise the USPS of what issues they face in terms of data management and storage.	Industry Participants
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 update and re-distribute the comparison grid showing what workgroup members are doing in terms of measurement data.	Becky Dobbins
Pending	Provide the USPS with additional agenda items for upcoming meetings	All participants

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 12, by telecon beginning at 12:00 noon EST. Future meetings are scheduled as follows, beginning at 12:00 noon EST:

Thursday January 22 (week of two holidays)

Mr. Sexton asked if the ending time line is still realistic with an e-mail survey now in the works. Ms. Berenblatt said if the group needs more time, it should ask for it. Ms. Siviter said the end of January time line has always seemed arbitrary.

Ms. Dobbins will do the survey by the end of this week, she said, and noted that the time line primarily was to identify if there were any show stoppers or anything unexpected that would impact IM implementation time lines, which there has not been.