



## Promote Development of “Intelligent” Mail

### Report Recap

The October 2001 report of the Mailing Industry Task Force recommended that the industry promote development of the “intelligent” mail piece by collaborating with the Postal Service to implement standards and systems to make every mail piece – including packages – unique. In support of that objective, the Task Force recommended 1) creation of a real-time Web-based service measurement tool, 2) development of delivery predictability programs and tools, 3) upgrading PLANET Code and CONFIRM recognition technologies to read two-dimensional barcodes, and 4) a pilot program for enhanced postal services, using print-to-Web links. Finding that the fourth initiative was being looked at by another Task Force group responsible for gateway services, the Task Force narrowed its focus to the first three strategic initiatives.

“The Postal Service, with the support of the mailing industry, has made significant progress in implementing the first recommendation,” concluded Chairman Michael Critelli, “and has plans in place for responding to the third. The second remains a future goal. The Postal Service has already taken several key steps to enable ‘intelligent’ mail in the near term. In addition, the industry and the Postal Service have identified a number of other benefits that can be derived from implementing ‘intelligent’ mail.”

### The Intelligent Mail Vision

“Intelligent” mail is more than just putting information on the mail piece. It includes capturing electronic data about individual mail pieces, trays, pallets, sacks, containers and shipments of mail from creation through delivery and communicating that data over the Web to mailers, recipients and the Postal Service. The Task Force concluded that “intelligent” mail will benefit mailers, mail recipients and the Postal Service. Benefits will include:

- More reliable, predictable and measurable service
- The ability for customers to encode more information on the mail piece for their needs
- Improved customer relationship management from greater knowledge about the mail process
- Improved planning and decision making regarding follow-up business activities and the ability to coordinate activities with other media, particularly because of both in-transit and end-to-end tracking
- Enhanced security and privacy from greater knowledge about the origin and path of mail through the system
- More efficient payment and collection
- Improved information about the volume of mail flowing through the entire mail value chain, enabling more effective operational planning and performance
- Future market-driven, value-added services

### Progress to Date

The Task Force has helped the Postal Service to begin developing a high-level strategy for “intelligent” mail that includes elements of policy, technology, privacy and security. In addition, the Task Force has worked with USPS to:

- Determine new customer requirements to build on the existing Confirm® and Delivery Confirmation™ service offerings.
- Demonstrate that existing customer and postal capabilities and technology form a strong foundation for “intelligent” mail.

The Task Force is pleased to note that the Postal Service has already started to put in place the building blocks of “intelligent” mail. In so doing, USPS has:

- Implemented Confirm® which provides electronic tracking information from mail entry through the automated processing environment for letter and flat mail.
- Enabled all automated letter and flat-processing equipment to read the Planet Code used for Confirm.
- Developed the Information-Based Indicia (IBI), a two-dimensional bar code that greatly increases the information that can be encoded on a mail piece.
- Awarded a contract to upgrade the camera technology on letter equipment to capture a broader range of information from the mail piece.
- Begun testing parcel sorting machines equipped to read IBI codes and Delivery Confirmation™ codes.
- Filed a Confirm® rate case.

- Finalized common postal-and-industry-shared Confirm® reports.
- Started to evaluate the feasibility of adding IBI reading capability to some flat-sorting machines.

### **Planned Actions**

The Task Force recommends the following next steps:

- Complete a high-level strategy for “intelligent” mail including elements of policy, technology, privacy and security.
- Work with the Postal Service to determine code contents versus database contents, appropriate symbologies, the impact of “intelligent” mail on current operating equipment, and the impact of “intelligent” mail on the Service’s information technology infrastructure.
- Promote Postal Service solicitation of “intelligent” mail samples from mailers, perform pilot tests on “intelligent” mail, and assist in validation of its cost/benefit value.
- Assuming an attractive cost/benefit value, support USPS deployment of updated equipment and implementation of an enhanced “intelligent” mail program.
- Leverage collateral benefits to better define “trusted mailers-trusted mail” and enhance the privacy and security associated with mail.
- Promote publishing coding standards within the ISO framework and coordinate these codes with the Universal Postal Union (UPU).
- Determine if it is feasible to establish a linkage between “intelligent” mail and address quality.
- Continue to explore ways to use “intelligent” mail to make mail service more predictable.
- To work with the Postal Service to investigate means of bringing “intelligent” mail into personal use, making it flexible and universally available.
- Ensure that value and investment are balanced and appropriately staged.

### **Task Force Process**

A committee created to further develop the Task Force’s “intelligent” mail proposals included representatives from Pitney Bowes, Symbol Technologies, DST Output, Westvaco, Stamps.com, NCR, Canon USA, IBM, MBNA, Lockheed Martin, Hewlett-Packard Company, Neopost North America, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Co-chaired by Michael Critelli, the Chairman and CEO of Pitney Bowes, and by Postal Service Senior Vice President, and Chief Technology Officer, Charlie Bravo, and Tom Day, Vice President for Engineering. The committee was supported by a team of postal specialists in both technology and engineering.

Bravo summed up the opinion of the members of the committee when he said, “We believe that ‘intelligent’ mail, a mail piece unique identifier and associated support infrastructure will provide opportunities to improve service, reduce costs, add security and enhance mail as a vital communications channel.”