



Implement an Industry Council

Report Recap

The October 2001 report of the Mailing Industry Task Force (MITF) recommended the establishment of a unified, CEO-level council whose mission would be to ensure the viability of the hard-copy mail delivery system by focusing on standards development, channel promotion and issues awareness. In support of that objective, Task Force members proposed that 1) the council develop an advertising and marketing program for mail, the mailing industry and the challenges both face, 2) the council lead debate on major industry policy issues, 3) the council lead development of standards to enhance mail piece tagging and direct mail production, and 4) the council examine opportunities to deepen the relevance and importance of mail.

Given the crisis precipitated by the incidents of 9/11 and the anthrax bio-terrorism attacks, the Task Force agreed to support initiatives that address both short-term concerns around mail security and the need for reform, and longer-term goals and objectives relating to industry unification. The Task Force stated that the Postal Service would not participate on the council, due to its statutory requirements.

The Industry Council Vision

Several forces of change – privacy and security concerns, unfavorable publicity, and the lack of standards – challenge mailers and the mailing industry. To meet the challenge, industry leaders have agreed to develop a CEO-level council with a mandate to speak to the future and vitality of the hard-copy mail system.

Marketing and strategic messaging, promotion of industry standards, and establishing industry-wide positions on key public policy issues will be among its roles. The Task Force has concluded that such a council, comprised of CEOs from key member companies, is necessary to keep mail a vibrant part of society. The Council's mission will be to strengthen the position of the mailing industry to ensure the long-term vitality of the channel.

Progress To Date

The Task Force launched several initiatives relating to the CEO Council and its proposed mandate:

Create an Industry-wide Transformation Plan Effort. The Task Force will coordinate efforts within the mailing industry to communicate that the Council supports the USPS in its effort to transform itself to remain viable, and that the Task Force is pleased that the Transformation Plan has adopted the recommendations of the Mailing Industry Task Force.

Develop and Launch an Advertising and Marketing Program. The Task Force – supported by the Wunderman agency – developed messaging for a highly-targeted advertising campaign directed towards influencers whose opinions and commentary could affect the outcome of legislative reform efforts, and drafted a first-phase launch for the program. After a preview in San Diego during the National Postal Forum, the messaging – centered on the concept that mail plays a crucial role in American business and in American lives – will be delivered through selected trade publications and newspapers in and around Washington, D.C. The first phase is scheduled to last six weeks, and will be supported by contributions from Council member companies and other industry firms. A direct mail component and a second phase, featuring high-profile CEOs whose businesses depend upon mail, are in development.

Coordinated Government Relations Strategy. In response to last fall's security and confidence concerns, talking points and position papers were developed around postal reform, emergency funding and other pressing policy issues for the MITF Steering Committee. The message points allowed industry leaders to speak with one voice when interacting with legislators and other policy makers. This proved valuable in the industry's successful efforts to obtain emergency funding for the USPS to address mail security. The Task Force Steering Committee also chose a member to act as a government relations representative to ensure committee activities are focused and coordinated. The committee will continue to develop message points that can be used by the industry to carry out agreed-upon goals. The first issue the MITF should take up is to coordinate efforts regarding the USPS Transformation Plan.

Establish a CEO-level Council. The Task Force further defined the Mailing Industry CEO Council and formulated a draft mission statement outlining the Council's role. The Council will be presented as a "business roundtable" whose charter would mandate it to address major public policy issues, to promote the value of the mail channel, and to develop industry standards. The goal will be to position the Council as the "go to" group which the Postal Service and public policy decision-makers and influencers would use as a leading-edge resource for best practices.

Outside counsel was obtained and necessary documentation was developed to support establishment of a non-profit corporation to support the Council. Industry input indicated that this vehicle was best suited for fundraising purposes and to meet the objective of lobbying on behalf of industry interests.

The draft mission statement for the Council reads, "The mission of the Mailing Industry CEO Council is to unify the mailing industry and to promote the critical role of mail in U.S. business and commerce." Once formed, the Council – as its charter – "will determine the best methods to meet evolving customer needs, enhance the capabilities of the mail 'product' to complement and compete effectively with other communication methods, and identify new learnings and opportunities relevant to all aspects of the mailing industry."

The draft mission statement and the proposed governance structure for the CEO Council will be reviewed with the MITF Steering Committee, whose members are expected to form the core membership of the CEO Council. Among the design principles of the governance model will be to ensure the continued personal commitment and active participation of the industry CEOs; and that the Council regularly review the relevance of the council, its charter and objectives.

Provide Standards Development Leadership. Members of the Task Force, along with their counterparts at the Postal Service, led standards-development efforts as part of the work done by Task Force committees on intelligent mail, consumer gateway services, preparation and entry optimization, payments and credit, pricing, address quality, and network optimization. The Task Force reiterated its commitment to drive the development of unified standards – based on customer needs – for the enhancement of mail piece tagging and direct mail production in order to capture data and share information electronically. Such standards create an environment for stimulating growth and efficiency.

Planned Actions

The Task Force intends to pursue the following:

- Establish the Mailing Industry CEO Council as a legal entity, and raise its profile through policy-focused communications
- Further development of marketing strategies and participation in special events to promote the value of the mail channel and to stimulate media coverage of the mailing industry, in support of Task Force goals
- Continue efforts to develop unified standards, particularly through continuation of Task Force work groups
- Expand participation and acquire funding for further Council activities

Task Force Process

After the October report, the Task Force created a committee that brought together a broad cross-section of the industry to formulate an action plan for the Mailing Industry CEO Council. The committee is co-chaired by Michael Critelli, Chairman and CEO, Pitney Bowes, and by David Sable, President and CEO, Wunderman.

The companies participating on the committee include ADVO, Lockheed Martin, the Association for Postal Commerce, Paramount Cards, Capital One, R.R. Donnelley, the Direct Marketing Association, Symbol Technologies, and DraftWorldwide.