

NPF: Vendors offering tools to mitigate rate increase

WASHINGTON – Despite the postal rate increases taking place on May 14, mailers and suppliers to the mailing community here at the National Postal Forum seemed upbeat about the state of the industry and ready to work to find ways to make their mailings less expensive and more efficient.

About 7,000 industry professionals are attending the four-day conference here at the Washington Convention Center through March 28. The forum offers 150 workshops, three day-long symposiums, special sessions, and 13 professional certificate programs. The rates were on everyone's minds as they are rising on May 14.

"There is an energy and excitement here, because I think the mailing community is finally understanding the importance of address quality and how it can impact the costs of mail," said Chris Lien, commercial mail director and postal affairs co-chair at San Jose, CA-based Business Objects.

Indeed, many vendors on the trade show floor here offered products and services designed to help mailers get the right mail piece to the right person while at the same time save mailing costs.

Rancho Santa Margarita, CA-based [Melissa Data](#), for example, was demonstrating its new MAILERS+4 Automation Suite at its booth, which includes Address Object, which verifies, corrects, and standardizes addresses against the USPS National Address File. It also includes Presort Object, which sorts all qualifying mail pieces into groups by ZIP Code. All of the pieces going to the same destination get grouped into the same package or tray, so mailings qualify for the lowest rate possible.

John Ward, vice president and general manager of mail services at Stamford, CT-based [Pitney Bowes Inc.](#) discussed Pitney's PSI division and how the company is a USPS work share partner that offers presort services, such as high-speed automation, intelligent work-flow and high-volume discounts.

"No one likes a rate increase," he said." But by partnering with the private sector, the postal service has been able to minimize the impact of the rate increase for mailers."

Some vendors offered scales and folder insert products that help businesses reduce mailing costs and increase mailing efficiency and productivity.

Paris-based [Neopost](#) for example, showcased its IJ-Dynamic Scale shape-based compliant dynamic scale and its DS-80 folder inserter.

With the new USPS shape-based pricing structure, the size, thickness and weight of parcels will be taken into consideration when determining postage. Neopost said the IJ-DS features a four-point detection system that automatically measures packages in order to correctly classify and rate outgoing mail based on the new 2007 postal rates.

Also as a result of the pricing structure, changing mail from flats to letter formats will directly equate to significant postage savings. The DS-80 folder inserter is designed to change the shape of mail, Neopost said.

Envelope vendors also explained how many of their customers and prospects are trying to find ways to switch from flats-shaped to letter-shaped envelopes. To do this, many are planning to fold their mailers to fit into a letter-sized envelope.

"We have many customers coming to us, asking if they can switch from a flat envelope such as a 9 by 12 to a 6 by 9," said Beverly B. Chrismon, a sales representative at [National Envelope](#), Raleigh, NC.

Ms. Chrismon also said that many customers are asking about the environmental impact of her company's products, and she explained that her company offers many "green" precuts, including envelopes printed with soy ink, envelopes made with recycled paper, and envelopes made with chlorine-free paper.

"We even purchase renewable wind power energy which contributes to cleaner air and the reduction of dependence on fossil and nuclear fuels," she said.

The USPS is also taking steps to improve its environmental characteristics. Jim Cochran, manager of package services at the USPS who spoke at a session here said the USPS has worked with vendors to analyze its packaging composition; changed inks, chemicals and adhesives used in manufacturing; and redesigned its packages for simplicity and to minimize ink.

"We also significantly reduced toxins, without increasing costs," he said.

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