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ADVERTISING MAIL: ELECTRONIC MAIL IS THE WAY OF THE FUTURE...ARE YOU SURE?

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA (November 8, 2011) – In 1976 the postal service issued a report that predicted electronic media would decrease physical mail delivery. Thirty-five years later that prediction has proven correct, but will physical mail delivery ever completely go away? In today's information age, other than receiving packages, people can essentially communicate for free which would make us believe there is no future in physical mail delivery i.e., snail mail. Email has given us the ability to send letters, files and even greeting cards electronically. If it were socially acceptable, wedding invitations would come by e-mail. The fact that we can now receive bank and utility statements online, pay our bills electronically and use social media to communicate faster than ever before would seem that snail mail is on borrowed time. But what about direct mail advertising? This is what many in the mailing industry question as they look to the future of their business.

Student Monitor, which has conducted market research of college and university students since 1987, recently asked undergraduates about their preferences in receiving advertising mail. They were specifically asked, "thinking about advertising material you may receive in the U.S. Mail from marketers such as East Bay, Victoria's Secret, urban Outfitters, AT&T, best buy and Papa John's, how interested would you be in receiving these materials in digital format as an alternative to the current printed, paper format?" At first response the average person would guess the overwhelming answer to be in favor of electronic format. On the contrary, only 29% of the students expressed interest (9% very interested and 20% somewhat interested) in receiving advertising mail electronically as an alternative to paper. Surprising? We thought so too.

Intra-Mail Network ("IMN") further evaluated the results from Student Monitor and found that 36% of the students indicated they were very uninterested in receiving advertising mail in electronic format. One interpretation is that they really prefer receiving print catalogs. Another could be that their response reflects disinterest in receiving advertising material all together. Or maybe the questions did not provide enough information. Either way, we know from the results that 26% of students were indifferent and 10% were somewhat uninterested in receiving electronic mail. What this tells us is that 36% were in the middle meaning that they would not be offended if they received electronic rather than hard-copy advertising. This tells us that there is a definite interest among students in receiving advertising mail electronically rather than in print form. We conclude that there is a large group of students who may be better off but definitely no worse off if they received electronic mail suggesting that some students may want the option to decide in which form they want to receive material that otherwise will come through physical mail delivery.

More than two-thirds of mail today is in advertising mail. Converting half the mail to digital would significantly reduce the amount of time campus mail centers spend sorting and delivering mail. The costs to dispose of recycled material with incorrect or inadequate addresses would also significantly reduce. IMN addresses this with Waste Free Mail 2.0 (WFM 2.0).

WFM 2.0 is database-driven mass electronic mail hygiene, delivery, and records management application. WFM 2.0 has the capability to track and archive information for the distribution of advertising journals, magazines and marketing materials to bulk lists of addressees' at large institutions such as colleges and universities and government agencies. WFM 2.0 will scan and convert physical, hard copy documents into electronic versions of same, with no loss of clarity, readability, layout, design, or pagination from the original source document. Hard copy delivery of a mailer shall be performed only if a recipient has opted out of e-mail, if no e-mail address for the recipient is available, or if the item cannot be digitized and warehoused.

So although we cannot say for certain if physical mail will go the way of the Pony Express, we do know that preferences are changing as more options become available for mailers to communicate with their intended audiences. As advertisers look to redesign their business models to appeal to current trends in mailing and the preferences of their consumers, IMN, with the introduction of WFM 2.0, is ready to address the changing needs of mailers. Intra-Mail Network's patented process lowers mailing rates, enhances delivery and reduces paper waste. IMN gets your message delivered!

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