

Graham Sergent

# Getting it Right for SendRight™

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**Acxiom's Graham Sergent discusses the business implications of being unprepared for New Zealand Post's SendRight programme deadline of July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008.**

Time flies. It's hard to believe that it's February already. This time next year only a few short months will remain before New Zealand Post's SendRight™ programme comes into effect. One of the Direct Marketing industry's most significant events for many years, SendRight, along with the revised four-digit postcode, is part of a wider initiative by New Zealand Post to help businesses improve the accuracy of their communications.

SendRight has been designed by New Zealand Post to assist mailers by introducing an industry-wide benchmark for address accuracy through the Statement of Accuracy (SOA). From July 1st 2008 a SOA will be required for companies to qualify for bulk mail discounts.

Nobody relishes change. However, we should remember that with change comes opportunity. Likewise the postal addressing changes offer immense opportunities and tangible benefits, particularly if you plan ahead. July 2008 may seem to be a long way off, but time has a way of running out. There are more data quality issues than updating a few postcodes to consider, making cleansing and updating your customer address data a priority.

If you don't perceive data quality to be your concern, consider this. Who in your organisation is held responsible for your cost per campaign? Who handles and answers for returned mail? Who's accountable when campaign response rates fall short of expectation, and who is on the front line of customer dissatisfaction?

In 2006 New Zealand Post distributed nationwide mailer to each household, rural address and PO Box announcing the postcode revision. Consequently, your customers will expect you to have their correct details on file. Do you have a solution in place to automatically update your customers' addresses prior to your next contact? Do you have a solution that is able to verify the address updates your customers provide against the Postal Address File (PAF)?

The adoption of new address standards has altered the format of almost half of New Zealand address, changes to common address abbreviations and suburb reallocation. Combined with the postcode change, old and new versions of the same address may now appear quite different. Will your existing data matching systems recognise these records as duplicates?

This has far reaching implications for your business. Deficient data quality results in the inability to maintain an accurate single customer view, leading to poorly

targeted campaigns, lowered response rates and increased returned mail. Mail costs may mount as more mail is duplicated, returned or re-routed, and invoices not immediately finding their intended recipient can lengthen a payment cycle. Customers who lose confidence in your processes will begin that slippery slide into dissatisfaction. Suddenly, conducting business is more onerous, and you are wishing you had heeded the impact of address accuracy on your data quality a lot earlier.

Also consider the use of geodemographic products or data mining to analyse and segment customer databases, enhance prospect targeting and improve DM response rates. Will your current product work with both old and new postcodes?

So how do you embark on cleaning your existing customer data to be compliant with SendRight? The software needed to verify and clean existing address data in accordance with SendRight requirements can be licenced, or you can work with a New Zealand Post certified data services provider such as Acxiom.

Recognition of old address formats and postcodes by New Zealand Post will be phased out by 2008, potentially leaving your current data invalid. Jump ahead of the pack by reviewing your data quality, and the processes you have established around maintaining that quality, now. Extensive lead time will allow you to adopt a systematic approach to data quality, both preparing you for SendRight and placing you at the forefront of customer recognition and relationship management.

While your competitors may enter 2008 unprepared for a compliance deadline, by acting now you can identify potential problem areas in your data quality and rest secure in the knowledge that you have taken action to streamline mail and campaign costs, minimise wastage, target campaigns and ensure customer satisfaction.