Fueling Your Mailing and Shipping Success

Delivering Democracy: 2020 Vision

Tammy Patrick / May 6th, 2019
Tens of millions of American Voters have their ballots handed to them by their USPS Postal Carrier, not a pollworker.
Together election officials, industry, and USPS serve the American Electorate and “Deliver Democracy”
• Captures basic information regarding the postal issue that you are experiencing and reports it directly into the USPS reporting system!
Same election, different envelopes.
Real World Implications & Examples of WHY IT MATTERS

- Ballot delivery: VISIBILITY
- Ballot return: ACCEPTANCE
First Step: Visibility

FOR ALL

VOTER

BALLOTS USE

TAG
Visibility: Tag 191s
Visibility: Tag 191s

Election Mail
States and localities are increasingly using mail in the election process. Election Mail is any item mailed to or from authorized elections officials that enables citizens to vote, such as:

- Ballot materials
- Voter registration cards
- Absentee applications
- Polling place notifications

Get the Election Mail Kit »
Submit an order for Tag 191 online »
Visibility: Ballot STIDs!

- With the new STID we will increase election mail visibility in the mail stream and be able to communicate where ballots are en route.
Visibility: Official Logo

The Ballot STID is the data equivalent of the Official Mail Logo, but that visual indicator is still a critical element of election mail design.

Sadly, not everyone is using it.
Visibility: Individual Tracking

Dave Bjerke  
October 20 at 3:23pm - 1

Ballot Tracking is so money!
Voter calls to say she hasn’t received her ballot she requested a few weeks ago. I go to our ballot tracking app and ask for her name. I find her and tell her that our tracking system says it was delivered October 3rd.
Voter: Oh really?
Me: Yes, ma’am.
Voter: I wonder if it was delivered to another unit and they just haven’t brought it to me.
Me: Would you like me to send you another ballot?
Voter: Well, it’s been 2 weeks. It should be here. Just a minute, let me look through the mail on my desk. Here’s something from the City. Ah yes, there it is. Well thank you for helping me find my ballot right here on my desk.
Me: Happy to help.
Recommended last day to apply for a ballot by mail is this weekend! Go make sure you’re registered* correctly and apply online right now! 
https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation
* Registration deadline was the 16th. It’s now too late to register or update for the election on 11/7

Virginia Voter Information – Citizen Portal
Access your Virginia Voter Record to update registration, apply to vote absentee, and view your voter-related information.
VOTE.ELECTIONS.VIRGINIA.GOV
Visibility: Individual Tracking

Me: Would you like me to send you another ballot?
Voter: Well, it's been 2 weeks. It should be here. Just a minute, let me look through the mail on my desk. Here's something from the City. Ah yes, there it is. Well thank you for helping me find my ballot right here on my desk.
Me: Happy to help.
Visibility: Push vs. Pull of information

- Information can be retrievable when voters call/look-up online, or sent as texts or emails notifications.
Informed Delivery is another security layer for voters.

By signing up they will know when to anticipate the ballot in their mailbox!
Judge orders election official to collect ballot data in Iowa House race separated by 9 votes

Barbara Rodriguez, Des Moines Register  Published 11:08 a.m. CT Dec. 3, 2018 | Updated 3:23 p.m. CT Dec. 3, 2018

- Close races.
- **REALLY** close races were the story in 2018.
- & that’s when the scrutiny starts…
Return: Help voters be successful by conveying recommended mailing times.

Texas Law requires that your ballot be received by the County Clerk before or on Election Day.

To ensure that your ballot will arrive before Election Day, please mail your voted ballot as soon as possible, before or by November 1st.

La Ley de Texas requiere que su boleta sea recibida por el Secretario del Condado antes o en el día de la elección.

Para asegurar que su boleta llegue antes del día de la elección, por favor envié su boleta votada lo más pronto posible, antes de o el 1º de noviembre.
Return: Postmark

Are you a state that allows postmark?

Let voters know that they can ask for a hand-cancel/round stamp at any USPS office to be certain their ballot envelope gets stamped if it’s close to Election Day!
Return: Postmark

• Postmarks used to be the only way to know if a mail-piece entered the mail-stream in time—but that is no longer the case and states are reinterpreting what that means statutorily.

• Now we have data too…

• Does your statute allow for its use?
25-1132. Advance voting; delivery of ballots; where; deadline for receiving ballots. (a) All advance voting ballots which are received in the office of the county election officer or any polling place within the county not later than the hour for closing of the polls on the date of any election specified in K.S.A. 25-1122(f), and amendments thereto, shall be delivered by the county election officer to the appropriate special election board provided for in K.S.A. 25-1133, and amendments thereto. 
(b) Subject to the deadline for receipt by the office of the county election officer as set forth in this subsection, all advance voting ballots received by mail by the office of the county election officer after the closing of the polls on the date of any election specified in K.S.A. 25-1122(f), and amendments thereto, and which are postmarked or are otherwise indicated by the United States postal service to have been mailed on or before the close of the polls on the date of the election, shall be delivered by the county election officer to a special election board or the county board of canvassers, as determined by the secretary of state, for canvassing in a manner consistent, as nearly as may be, with other advance voting ballots. The deadline for the receipt by mail of the advance voting ballots by the office of the county election officer shall be the last delivery of mail by the United States postal service on the third day following the date of the election, unless additional time is permitted by the secretary. The secretary of state shall adopt rules and regulations to implement this subsection.

Don’t use prescriptive language since things can change!
Return: Processing Mark Data

- In 2016 Ohio Secretary of State Husted passed a directive allowing for the use of processing marks to demonstrate a ballot was mailed in time.

- In 2018 Washington Secretary of State Kim Wyman got scanners for all the counties in Washington.
Total number of ballots “saved” by the ID Tag Scanner for the 2016 Primary Election in Cuyahoga County. 73
Alaska also used the processing marks to validate that a candidate had submitted their nomination paperwork on time—consider all of your due-date implications.
Back to those close elections in 2018:

See How Close the Results Are in Georgia, Florida and Arizona

We’re tracking the votes as they are tallied in two races for governor and two for Senate that have slim margins.
A few days?... but I want it now!
Yes, the public wants results.

Election officials want those results to be accurate and to not have expediency cause error or omission.

Accuracy takes time.
Yet, we know voters like options & unofficial result are JUST THAT—allowing for use of postmarks/IMb/processing marks/drop-offs can mean final results take longer (& eligible votes get COUNTED rather than rejected).
We need to empower voters & provide options for secure return. If options aren’t an option, then be certain your instructions are VERY clear!
Return: Data & Review

- Does your system have mechanisms in place to identify if there are problems, either by voters or outside influence?
- Procedures written down?
- Uniform?
- How’s training?
Return: Signature Verification / Authentication

- System should help you track issues with “Late” ballots
- What was the mailing date? (IE Why is it late?)
- Did they lack a postmark and that is why you couldn’t count?
- Was postmark illegible?
- Was there other data you could use if law allowed?
- Or was it truly “late”, IE voter mailed it past Election Day?
Return: Signature Verification / Authentication

- System should help you track staff performance
- Do you have “Acceptors” & “Rejecters”?
- Are there trends in their actions/determination?
- Does performance vary by time of day/\textit{hours worked}?
- If tiered system, the second review should be helpful in spotting issues.
Return: Signature Verification / Authentication

- System should help you track patterns
- What was application for “Bad Sigs”—same channel/group?
- Is there a regional issue—all on one street/neighborhood?
- Timing—received on the same day/with same sign date?
- Categories of rejection—lots of failures to sign, *is a sign (of possible bad design)*!
Return: Signature Verification / Authentication

- Notifying voters when there are issues in the acceptance of their ballot is a security measure as well as good customer service.

- If it is a bad signature, and truly not theirs, how else would you know?
Leveraging technology and partnerships will result in successful elections & voters being well served.