



UNDER THE SHELL

A Free informational publication for direct marketers



March 13, 2012

Cheap Postage and Multi-Channels! The Postal Service Announces A Special Promotion for Mobile Barcodes this Summer!

Welcome to Under the Shell!

Our goal at SnailWorks is to give direct mail marketers the tools to strengthen their marketing efforts by incorporating new channels. To that end we present Under the Shell, our monthly newsletter designed to keep you informed on how you can tie all of these marketing tools together. We have a clear vision of what multi-channel marketing can mean for the direct mail community. We'll strive to make everything we include in *Under the Shell* relevant to your efforts. If we can make it entertaining, too...well, we'll try.

Oh, and please don't take offense at the term "snail" mail. We mean it endearingly. Our whole business is built to ride along with that snail, so we have nothing but respect and affection – in fact, our credo is "Hail the Snail!"

The Postal Service is having another sale this summer –another mobile barcode sale, just like last year! Well, not JUST like last year. There are some critical differences that oddly enough (for the Postal Service) make a lot of sense.

This time around, your mobile barcode has to actually serve a purpose - trickier than you may think.

Fortunately, we can help.

First, here are the basics on the sale:

- This promotion, the snazzily-named *2012 Mobile Commerce and Personalization Promotion* has been submitted to the PRC (Postal Regulatory Commission) for approval – it is not yet official, but is expected to be approved;
- It is scheduled to run for mail inducted July 1 through August 31, 2012;
- Mail that has a qualifying mobile barcode on it (typically a QR code) will be eligible for a 2% discount on their postage;
- The eligible classes are Standard Mail letters and flats; Nonprofit Standard Mail letters and flats; First-Class Mail presort and automation letters, cards, and flats.
- No periodicals, no parcels, No non-presorted mail.
- All the pieces must have an Intelligent Mail barcode and a mobile barcode or "similar print technology" on them;



Here's the tricky part: The barcode (or that mysterious "similar print technology") must take the recipient to either a "web" page that allows the recipient to buy whatever it is you're selling right then and there on their mobile device, or a personalize URL which is a "web" page that is - quoting the Postal Service – "unique to an individual recipient." (We put the word "web" in quotes as mobile sites are not technically "web" sites, which is kind of the point. We will, however, pick at no more nits.)

Last year you just needed to slap some kind of QR code on the mail piece and you got a 3% discount. Most of those we saw were pretty much useless – just took you to the organization's home page, which is lovely but kinda hard to read on your 3" iPhone screen. So many postage discounts were given out, but not many QR codes were clicked.

Thus, the Postal Service has come out with this year's model, a smaller discount with a lot more work. But, as we said at the start, this really does make sense. The goal of the Postal Service with this promotion is to encourage the linking of snail mail to Internet technology, and the growing channel is definitely mobile. With the rules they have created for this promotion, they are forcing marketers to be relevant in their use of mobile.

Frankly, in our view there's not much point in just slapping a generic QR code on your mail piece just so you can get a small postage discount. If you are going to the trouble of creating a QR code, and dedicating some of your precious direct mail real estate to it, you should make it help your mail. If your prospects take the time to click your QR code, reward them for it! Give them an opportunity to buy or donate right then and there, right on their smart phone. Make a landing page that is designed just for them, using personalized information reached by the QR code. If you do it right, you may lift the response rate and increase customer satisfaction with an improved experience. At worst, you'll save a couple of bucks on postage.

Getting It Right!

Setting up for this promotion, and for proper use of QR codes in general, is a bit more complex than most appreciate. A generic QR code that just takes a prospect to your home page is certainly easy enough – and pretty much a waste of time. This time around, let us help you do it right. At a minimum, you should do the following with your mailing:

- Append a PURL (Personal URL) to each record. If they're embedded in a QR code, you can make them less "human-friendly" since they won't need to type them in. We call PURLs specific to QR code "QRURLS".
- Make the QR code on each piece unique, using the QRURL mentioned above. This requires more personalization and digital printing.
- Create a landing page that is optimized to mobile platforms. This is essential to having a useful customer experience, and to getting you promotional discount from USPS.
- Consider including an e-commerce option on the mobile landing page. Make it easy to buy and be done with the offer. If you are a fundraiser, you can customize the ask amounts based on the information accessed by the QRURL. They select an amount, select a method of payment, and they can be done with your offer before their mail moment has even ended.



None of this is difficult, but it requires a special expertise and experience. There are a lot of folks who can create a mobile optimized landing page, but creating the PURLs and QRURLs and relating them back to the mail piece and the required postal regulations requires a special set of skills.

That's why we created SnailWorks!

SnailWorks offers a full range of integrated direct marketing tools on one web-based platform. We can help you optimize your campaigns today to take advantage of all of the capabilities of integrating your direct mail to other channels. Meeting the requirements for this promotion is just another day at the office for us – it's what we do.

There is a lot of detail to this upcoming promotion that we can't touch on here in less than book form. Call us and we can talk about it endlessly!

Call us at 855 MYSNAIL (855-697-6245), or visit us on the web at www.mysnailworks.com for more information.

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