

# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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# Utilization of Marketing and Sales Data for Executives

# Audit Report

Report Number MS-AR-15-002

March 4, 2015



# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

# **Highlights**

The CMSO effectively uses available data to manage business activities and mitigate risks. However, it does not have well-structured, comprehensive dashboards that consolidate data and key performance metrics related to domestic and international transactions, pricing, innovation, sales, and digital solutions.

#### Background

The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated an agency-wide series of seven audits to review U.S. Postal Service executives' use of data. Like any large organization, the Postal Service depends on data to manage its daily activities and business strategies. Postal Service executives and managers need effective and efficient access to internal and external data to make informed business decisions.

This audit focuses on the chief marketing and sales officer and executive vice president's (CMSO) use of data. The CMSO is responsible for domestic and international product development, pricing, sales and marketing, innovation, global business, and secure digital solutions.

Our objective was to determine whether the CMSO effectively uses internal and external business data to manage business activities and mitigate risk.

### What The OIG Found

The CMSO does not have all the data necessary to manage business activities. As discussed in previous OIG reports, complete data on, or visibility into, customers and revenue are not readily available. The CMSO recognizes these data limitations and is working toward the goal of achieving complete revenue visibility through reliable customer data and information systems that track revenue associated with each customer. This visibility would assist in strategic planning, as well as Sales force deployment, customer retention, and reconciliation of sales and actual revenue.

The CMSO effectively uses available data to manage business activities and mitigate risks. However, it does not have well-structured, comprehensive dashboards that consolidate data and key performance metrics related to domestic and international transactions, pricing, innovation, sales, and digital solutions. Comprehensive dashboards could help the CMSO digest and prioritize this information by integrating and presenting it in an accessible format. The use of comprehensive dashboards is a best practice and they are a primary management tool for executives.

### What The OIG Recommended

We recommended the CMSO enhance and expedite efforts to achieve complete customer and revenue data visibility and develop a comprehensive dashboard to better use data.

# **Transmittal Letter**

United States Postal March 4, 2015	SERVICE
MEMORANDUM FOR:	NAGISA M. MANABE CHIEF MARKETING AND SALES OFFICER, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
FROM:	E-Signed by Janet Sorensen RIFY authenticity with eSign Deskto Janet M. Sorensen Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Revenue and Resources
SUBJECT:	Audit Report – Utilization of Marketing and Sales Data for Executives (Report Number MS-AR-15-002)
	results of our audit of the Utilization of Marketing and Sales Data lumber 14RG021MS000).
	eration and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any onal information, please contact Joe Wolski, director, Retail, Sale at 703-248-2100.
Attachment	
cc: Corporate Audit and	Response Management

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# **Findings**

Best-in-class organizations have complete revenue visibility through reliable customer data and information systems that track revenue associated with each customer, from initiation of sale to realization of revenue. Having complete and accurate customer data improves revenue visibility by providing integrated metrics with customers and corresponding revenue.

### Introduction

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the Utilization of Marketing and Sales Data for Executives (Project Number 14RG021MS000). Our objective was to determine whether the chief marketing and sales officer and executive vice president (CMSO) effectively uses internal and external business data to manage business activities and mitigate risk. See Appendix A for additional information about this audit.

The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated an agency-wide series of audits to review the U.S. Postal Service's use of data. These audits included discussions and analysis of the data used by the deputy postmaster general and executive vice presidents. The OIG engaged the Corporate Executive Board (CEB) to identify the best practices for data use for corporate functions.

To enhance their understanding of the business environment, Postal Service management gathers and analyzes market, customer, and competitive intelligence data. When acted upon, such information improves planning, decision making, operations, and performance — essential elements for ensuring that products and services successfully meet customer needs; and for increasing mail volume, revenue, and profitability. Customers are more likely to choose the Postal Service as a primary partner if it can provide products and services to meet their needs and offer relevant solutions for their businesses.

A comprehensive dashboard that visually displays measurements and data offers a snapshot of business activities across functional areas. This can help executives get timely, accurate information and more quickly prioritize that information for improved decision making.

### Conclusion

The CMSO effectively uses available data to manage business activities and mitigate risks, but does not have all the data necessary to manage business activities. As discussed in previous OIG reports, complete data on customers and revenue are not readily available (see Appendix A). This information is critical for building deeper and more effective customer relationships and making more informed strategic decisions. The CMSO recognizes these data limitations and is working towards the goal of having complete customer and revenue visibility.

In addition to current efforts, the CMSO could benefit from a user friendly, comprehensive dashboard that includes relevant business metrics. The CMSO reviews data from a variety of reports, such as the Financial Performance Report, the Daily Sales Report, and special initiative dashboards. Comprehensive dashboards could help the CMSO digest and prioritize this information by integrating and presenting it in an accessible format. The use of comprehensive dashboards is a best practice and they are a primary management tool for executives.

#### Increase Customer and Revenue Visibility

Best-in-class organizations have complete revenue visibility through reliable customer data and information systems that track revenue associated with each customer, from initiation of sale to realization of revenue.<sup>1</sup> Having complete and accurate customer data improves revenue visibility by providing integrated metrics with customers and corresponding revenue. Postal Service management and the CMSO acknowledge the importance of customer and revenue visibility and are striving to achieve the goal

<sup>1</sup> OIG report, Revenue Plan and Sales Targets (Report Number MS-AR-14-007, dated September 8, 2014).

of having 95 percent visibility by fiscal year (FY) 2017 through Delivering Results, Innovation, Value, and Efficiency (DRIVE)<sup>2</sup> Initiative 30. Executives need complete and accurate information to make informed business decisions. We discussed the issues pertaining to reliable customer data and a revenue reconciliation system in previous OIG reports. Based on our review and prior audit findings:

- The Postal Service does not have complete revenue visibility through reliable customer data. Mailer<sup>3</sup> (By) and mail owner (For) information (collectively called "By/For data") is required for all commercial mailings,<sup>4</sup> including Full-Service Intelligent Mail. Although the Postal Service recommends customers use only one of the mail owner data fields, they can provide By/For data in four different data fields.<sup>5</sup> This contributes to inconsistent customer information provided to the Postal Service during the mailing process. The Postal Service's Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMb) is a key effort to improve customer data visibility. Postal Service executives stated their efforts to achieve more participation in Full-Service Intelligent Mail barcoding is partially hampered by regulatory requirements. We believe requiring Full-Service IMb could significantly increase customer data visibility.
- The Postal Service achieved about 81 percent mail owner visibility in FY 2014. This is a 35 percent improvement from the prior fiscal year, but it falls short of achieving complete visibility. Postal Service officials stated they will continue to monitor improvements in mail owner data accuracy monthly and the accuracy of customer-specific revenue reporting.

#### Table 1: By/For Customer Visibility Plan and Trend Analysis



Source: USPS

## The Postal Service achieved about 81 percent mail owner visibility in FY 2014.

This is a 35 percent improvement from the prior fiscal year, but it falls short of achieving complete visibility.

Hover over the years to reveal findings.

- 3 Also referred to as mailing agent, mail preparer, or mail service provider.
- 4 Mail owners mailing 5,000 mailpieces or less in Full-Service Intelligent Mail mailings are not required to be identified in electronic documentation. This exception is not applicable to non-profit mailpieces.
- 5 Mailer ID (MID), Customer Registration ID (CRID), Permit or Publication Number. When multiple fields are provided for a single Mail Owner or Mail Preparer, the Postal Service gives highest priority to the MID, second to the CRID, and third to the Permit/Publication Number.

The Postal Service achieved about 81 percent mail owner visibility in FY 2014. This is a 35 percent improvement from the prior fiscal year, but it falls short of achieving complete visibility.

<sup>2</sup> The DRIVE process is a structured approach to organizing operational and management activities that facilitates cross-functional dialogue and collaboration, provides streamlined reporting and accountability, and incorporates measurement, analysis, and evaluation of initiatives.

- Our research identified leading industry standard metrics and dashboards for marketing and sales organizations. These organizations emphasized the importance of well-structured dashboards with integrated business metrics as a primary management tool for executives.
- Incomplete customer data makes it difficult for management to perform critical analysis such as determining the customer churn rate,<sup>6</sup> which is one of the key metrics in addressing profitability. The Postal Service estimates a significant revenue loss for each year due to churn and defection.<sup>7</sup> Historically this information has not been completely visible.
- The Postal Service has domestic negotiated service agreements<sup>8</sup> (NSA) that generally result in mail volume and revenue increases. However, it is challenging to determine whether the increases were a direct result of NSA incentives due to lack of data distinguishing revenue as NSA-driven revenue from increased mailing activities revenue.<sup>9</sup>
- The Postal Service does not have a system to reconcile estimated and actual sales revenue.<sup>10</sup> This information would assist in strategic planning and in efforts such as Sales force deployment, customer retention, and reconciliation of sales and actual revenue.

When the Postal Service addresses these issues, it will have access to customer account data with corresponding revenue as well as aggregated customer and revenue changes for various sectors and businesses. As a result, management will be better positioned to track revenue changes from churn, defection, and new customers.

### **Best Practice Dashboards**

The CMSO would benefit from well-structured, comprehensive dashboards that consolidate data and key performance metrics in an accessible and efficient format for management decision making. The CMSO and other executives review internal and external data from a variety of reports related to domestic and international transactions, pricing, innovation, sales, and digital solutions. For example, executives review the *Financial Performance Report* for overall financial activities, review individual revenue reports to monitor revenue and volume changes, and review various dashboards to track DRIVE initiatives. Postal Service executives stated the data they receive are sufficient for identifying strategic priorities and risks. But a consolidated and comprehensive dashboard (or series of dashboards) could capture more focused and relevant information, thereby facilitating data review and decision making.

Our research identified leading industry standard metrics and dashboards for marketing and sales organizations. These organizations emphasized the importance of well-structured dashboards with integrated business metrics as a primary management tool for executives. Nearly all organizations with strong performance measurement and management practices include metrics from the following four categories:

- 1. Organizational Performance: Measures top-line (revenue) and bottom-line (profit) performance. These are core to any sales leadership dashboard and should be reported at multiple frequencies (monthly, quarterly, etc.).
- 2. Sales Process/Sales Activity: Shows status of key processes or activities that drive organizational performance such as operational efficiency and productivity.

<sup>6</sup> Churn is a term used to identify customers at risk of leaving the organization or decreasing their expenditures.

Defection denotes customers who have left the Postal Service for other providers.

<sup>8</sup> Negotiated service agreements are customized contracts between the Postal Service and specific mailers that provide customers special rebates, discounts, or pricing flexibility in return for increased mail volume and revenue growth.

<sup>9</sup> OIG report, Domestic Negotiated Service Agreements (Report Number MS-AR-13-007, dated April 29, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> OIG report, Revenue Plan and Sales Targets (Report Number MS-AR-14-007, dated September 8, 2014).

- 3. *Representative/Seller Performance:* Measures operational efficiency and productivity at the representative level to help show how well the workforce is deployed and performing at any given time.
- Customer: Measures customer impact, loyalty, and growth potential. The Postal Service needs to identify and capture specific metrics, such as By/For data, to reliably and predictably measure customer-related performances against organizational and functional goals.

Additionally, the presentation of metrics and data is almost as critical as the data itself. Visualizations such as trend graphs, bar charts, and other graphics would effectively convey key information and facilitate executives' understanding for responsive and effective decision making.

## Recommendations

We recommend management enhance and expedite efforts to achieve complete customer and revenue data visibility and develop a comprehensive dashboard to improve the effectiveness of data usage. We recommend the chief marketing and sales officer and executive vice president:

- 1. Enhance and expedite efforts to achieve complete customer and revenue data visibility.
- 2. Develop a comprehensive dashboard to improve the effectiveness of data usage.

#### **Management's Comments**

Management agreed with the findings and partially agreed with the recommendations.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated that, while they support the idea of achieving complete customer and revenue data visibility, they disagree that efforts beyond current initiatives are necessary to achieve the desired data transparency. Management stated that they have been actively pursuing visibility improvements through numerous efforts such as Full Service and IMPb package visibility and DRIVE Initiative 30, which is on target for attaining customer and product visibility greater than 90 percent by September 30, 2017.

Regarding recommendation 2, management agreed with the overall spirit of the OIG's recommendation but disagreed that additional executive level dashboards and metrics are necessary. However, management stated they will continue to improve existing dashboards and incorporate other metrics as necessary. Management noted they had a proactive strategy in place last year to improve visualization through a reporting upgrade with Microstrategy Visual Insight Essentials and are implementing the tool to provide additional improvements for dashboards and visualization of data. In follow-up correspondence, management stated they will enhance existing dashboards as deemed necessary by the report owners. Management noted that because this is an ongoing process depending on ever changing needs, they cannot give a specific date for upgrading existing dashboards.

See Appendix B for management's comments, in their entirety.

### **Evaluation of Management's Comments**

The OIG considers management's comments partially responsive to the recommendations in the report and alternative actions proposed by the Postal Service should correct the issues identified in the report.

Regarding recommendation 1, we agree that management has increased customer visibility, as noted during the course of our audit. As we note in this report, the Postal Service established a goal of 95 percent visibility by FY 2017, rather than 90 percent. We will continue to monitor the progress the Postal Service makes toward this goal.

Regarding recommendation 2, we believe that ongoing and planned upgrades to dashboards will improve the effectiveness of data usage and are sufficient to correct the issues noted in our report; therefore the OIG does not plan to formally pursue the recommendation thorough audit resolution.

We consider both recommendations significant, and therefore they require our concurrence before closure. All recommendations should be entered into the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system.

We request written confirmation when corrective action is completed for recommendation 1. This recommendation should not be closed in the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendation can be closed. Recommendation 2 can be closed with the issuance of this report.

# Appendices

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### Appendix A: Additional Information

### Background

The Postal Service operates one of the world's largest data networks, linking nearly 32,000 facilities through an inventory of over 795 computer applications. These applications make communication and data sharing among hundreds of thousands of employees and hundreds of systems possible. The data include information on operations, sales, retail, and commercial mailings and all other functional and program areas at the Postal Service.

Company executives monitor business functions using various types of presentations, including reports, scorecards, visual analysis tools, and dashboards.

- A report contains detailed data in a tabular format and typically displays numbers and text only, but can contain visualizations to highlight key data.
- A scorecard is a tabular visualization of measures and their respective targets with visual indicators to show at a glance how each measure is performing against its target.
- Visual analysis tools enable selection of various date ranges and products, or the ability to drill down to more detailed data.
- Dashboards are visual displays of the most important information needed to achieve one or more objectives, consolidated and arranged on a single screen to allow monitoring of information at a glance.

Research shows the key to effective performance measurement and management at the highest levels is the ability to define, capture, track, and monitor metrics that measure a specific function's (such as sales) performance against clear strategic and operational goals. When developing performance measures, high-performing organizations consider:

- Structure and presentation of metrics and data to be almost as important as the data itself.
- Combining data, retiring outdated metrics, and shifting toward key indicators to better forecast performance where possible.
- Creating documents that outline the purpose of these metrics to help executives understand the data, reports, and dashboards.
- Developing a suite of metrics that are relevant to specific audiences and prevent "data drowning."

### **Objective, Scope, and Methodology**

Our objective was to determine whether the CMSO effectively uses internal and external business data to manage business activities and mitigate risk. To meet this objective we needed to determine whether the CMSO:

- Had sufficient data analysis tools available.
- Used internal and external data to improve operations.
- Acquired useful data to improve operations.

- Proactively identified sources of internal data or performed data mining to support her oversight functions.
- Was hindered by access restrictions to internal data.

To make these determinations we:

- Conducted interviews and data reviews at Postal Service Headquarters in Washington, D.C.
- Engaged the CEB to identify marketing and sales best practice metrics for data use and best-in-class dashboards.
  - Compared CEB's 169 metrics to those used by the office of the CMSO to determine how they compared with the CEB's benchmark organizations.
  - Selected and sent 25 best practice metrics to the CMSO for review.
- Reviewed and analyzed OIG audit reports issued in FYs 2009 through 2014 to identify data-related issues pertaining to the CSMO.

We conducted this performance audit from May 2014 through March 2015, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on February 4, 2015, and included their comments where appropriate. We did not assess the reliability of any computer-generated data for this audit.

### **Prior Audit Coverage**

Report Title	Report Number Final Report Date		Monetary Impact (in millions)	
Revenue Plan and Sales Targets	MS-AR-14-007	9/8/2014	None	

**Report Results:** The Postal Service can improve how it determines, distributes, and monitors its revenue plan and sales targets to drive greater revenue performance and focus on revenue generation. Specifically, the Postal Service's revenue plan could be more aggressive to better promote growth and reflect increases in sales targets. We also found the Postal Service does not have a system to reconcile estimated revenue recorded by the Sales organization with actual realized revenue. Best practices of leading organizations include a robust account management and territory segmentation process and information systems that allow them to track revenue associated with customer accounts from initiation of the sales cycle to realization of revenue. Management generally disagreed with our recommendations.

#### Business Service Network MS-AR-14-005 7/9/2014 \$764

**Report Results:** Our report identified significant opportunities to increase the effectiveness of the BSN. First, the average resolution time for customer service requests must be reduced – currently it is 2 days longer than BSN guidance requires. Second, up to 53 percent of accounts that require outreach were not contacted proactively. Third, the BSN customer experience survey excludes a large percentage of BSN customers because it focuses on larger accounts and only covers recently closed service requests. Finally, the BSN employee performance evaluation is based on the results of the customer experience survey, which does not address metrics for individuals. Management agreed with the finding and two out of four recommendations while partially agreeing with the other two recommendations – increasing the BSN customer outreach and enhancing the BSN customer satisfaction survey process.

Inbound China ePacket	MC AD 14 002	2/25/2014	002
Costing Methodology	MS-AR-14-002	2/25/2014	\$39

**Report Results:** Our report found that the Postal Service should isolate the cost of China ePackets, which will help to establish effective pricing strategies. Although China Post sorts and dispatches ePackets separately from other mailpieces, the Postal Service did not calculate ePacket cost data separately from other letter post mailpieces or report it separately in the annual performance report to the Postal Regulatory Commission. Until accurate costs for ePackets can be identified and used as a basis for pricing, the risk of revenue loss for ePackets remains high. The Postal Service could also pursue a product classification change for inbound letter post packets, which could increase revenue from China Post and other business partners in emerging global markets. Management agreed with the finding and recommendations in the report through their formal response and subsequent to the response.

Domestic Negotiated Service	MS-AR-13-007	4/29/2013	\$1.2
Agreements	WIG-AIX-15-007	4/29/2013	Ψ1.Ζ

**Report Results:** Our review of nine NSAs revealed the agreements generally resulted in mail volume and revenue increases. We confirmed the Postal Service validated mail volumes reported by customers against its own data sources before entering into an NSA. However, we could not determine whether the increases in revenue and volume were a direct result of incentives offered by the agreements or whether mailers would have increased their mailing activity regardless of the incentives. In addition, the Postal Service did not always use accurate data to calculate rebates and discounts, which resulted in incorrect and questionable customer rebates and quarterly price adjustments. Further, the data reported to the PRC did not always agree with the amounts the Postal Service used to calculate discounts and rebates. Finally, the Postal Service does not have specific criteria governing retention of NSA data. We also noted another matter related to the statutory requirement that agreements cannot cause unreasonable harm to the marketplace. Management agreed with our recommendations.

Report Title	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact (in millions)
U.S. Postal Service Data Governance	DP-AR-13-004(R)	4/23/2013	None

**Report Results:** Our report found that the Postal Service could improve management of critical data to help managers and employees achieve strategic and operational goals. We identified 148 data-related issues in OIG reports issued in FYs 2009 through 2012. Although the Postal Service defined a structure for a data governance program in 2003, full roles and responsibilities were not uniformly adopted across the enterprise. We identified best practices of companies with successful data governance programs. Management agreed with the finding and, subsequent to their formal response, the recommendation in the report. Management also incorporated a data governance program under the DRIVE 19 initiative.

### Appendix B: Management's Comments



- 2 -

Commission (PRC) in particular has hindered our efforts in this regard particularly as it pertains to our Full-Service initiative. Specifically, the PRC has held that requiring mailers to use Full Service IMb to qualify for automation rates constitutes a "de facto" price increase thereby forcing the Postal Service to use up precious space under the CPIU price cap to effectuate changes in mailing behavior. While this decision is under appeal, the PRC's holding makes it more difficult for the Postal Service to quickly incent behavior that increases visibility data. The same can be said of the PRC's approach to other such initiatives such as the Tech Credit program, which provided an incentive to invest in the technology required for the information rich mailings that provide By/For data.

But the Postal Service disagrees that new measures must be implemented in order to satisfy OIG's recommendations. Despite the constraints mentioned previously, the Postal Service continues to work on visibility improvements. We are working with mail service providers to significantly improve customer data visibility through providing feedback via a Maller Soorecard. We are also actively reaching out to mallers to rectify data issues that are identified due to inaccurate reporting on behall of our customers. In addition, the Postal Service structures promotions to require mail owner visibility as a qualification.

The Postal Service also disagrees that it does not utilize well-structured, comprehensive dashboards that consolidate data and key performance metrics. Executive level dashboards, scorecards, and other visual formats are already in place today. These include metrics for:

- 1. Revenue and profit performance.
- Sales operational efficiency.
- 3. Productivity at multiple levels.
- 4. Customer-related performances

The Postal Service believes in continuous improvement and is always looking for innovative ways to improve the existing processes. In addition, the Postal Service is willing to look at existing analytics tools and techniques which are available in the industry. The Postal Service already had a proactive strategy in place last year to improve report visualization through a reporting tool upgrade with MicroStrategy Visual Insight Essentials. We are implementing this tool to provide additional improvements for dashboards and visualization of data.

#### Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Enhance and expedite efforts to achieve complete customer and revenue data visibility.

#### Management Response/Action Plan:

While Management supports the idea of driving towards complete customer and revenue data visibility, we believe we have already made substantial progress in this area given the constraints alluded to above. Management disagrees that additional efforts, outside those already planned, are necessary. The USPS is already fully committed to this goal through the DRIVE 30 program – an effort to improve customer data visibility that has been going on since 2011 and is on target for attaining customer and product visibility and accuracy to greater than 90 percent by FY17.

-3-Recommendation 2: Develop a comprehensive dashboard to improve the effectiveness of data usage. Management Response/Action Plan: While Management agrees with the overall spirit of the OIG recommendation, we disagree that additional dashboards, outside those already being utilized, are necessary. Executive level dashboards and other visual formats are currently in place today. Additionally, the Postal Service continues to improve existing dashboards and incorporate additional metrics to gauge the effectiveness of data usage. ha Nagisa M. Manabe cc: Sally K. Haring, Manager, Corporate Audit and Response Management



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1735 North Lynn Street Arlington, VA 22209-2020 (703) 248-2100