

# W4

**Wednesday  
Morning  
Fax  
from  
The  
Castle  
Press**

## **Cleaning databases worth \$Millions to mail advertisers**

**K**eeping your database up to date is a never-ending job that can pay off richly.

Almost 47 million U.S. people—17% of the population—change addresses every year. And the U.S. Postal Service reports that 40% of the households that move never turn in a change-of-address card.

On top of that, the USPS changes some 36 million ZIP codes a year. And millions of people marry, divorce, or otherwise change their names. Or quit work and retire to Pago Pago. Or die. And fumble-fingered clerks mess up between 10% and 40% of their records.

It's enough to make database marketers—and Chief Financial Officers—cry.

According to a Pitney Bowes analysis, one mailer—a cataloger—had a database that included these errors:

- 1% of the individuals in the database had died
- 1% of the persons in the database specifically had requested not to be sent promotional mail
- 5% of the database records carried incorrect names or addresses
- 10% of database entries were duplicates

The cataloger's database contained information on 30 million people. The company mailed 400 million catalogs a year to them. They cost \$0.75 each to produce, or \$300,000,000 yearly.

At a 10% incidence of duplications, the business was mailing 40 million redundant catalogs a year—thus squandering \$30 million yearly.

**"Pitney Bowes found that 37% of customer records contained flaws severe enough to impact deliverability and sales."**

—Eric Malmborg, *Direct Marketing magazine*

Eliminating even 1% of his duplicate database records would have saved the catalog mailer \$300,000 a year. Not chicken feed.

More, if the database records were massaged to purge the files of deceased individuals and people who had asked not to receive catalog mailings, the company could have printed and mailed 4.4 million fewer catalogs—and saved \$3,300,000 a year.

Correcting inaccurate names and addresses also would pay off. If even a small percentage of the company's misdelivered catalogs reached their intended recipients, instead of going astray in the mail stream, catalog sales would increase dramatically, at no additional cost. Reducing undeliverable records by only 1% would add a potential \$2.8 million in yearly sales revenue.

Your database probably includes less than the catalog mailer's 30 million records. But it may well contain the same percentage of incorrect entries. If so, your mailings are costing you too much and producing too little for you. Cleaning up your file would take you off those hooks. If The Castle Press can help, please let us know.

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