

**2008 Closing the Circle Award
Vendor Partnerships for Envelope Reuse
U.S. Postal Service – Washington, D.C.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is committed to protecting the environment, and believes that the fight to obtain a sustainable society must go beyond its own walls. To that end, USPS has encouraged its customers, vendors, and business partners to develop new green programs to meet the goals of E.O. 13423. This narrative describes the successful establishment of a program for reuse and recycling of mailing products. The program was pilot tested in 2005 and certified by USPS Engineering in 2007.

Three of the most successful examples of this type of partnership have been the collaboration between the Postal Service and MailAgain, a USPS business partner based in Houston, TX, Abitibi Paper Retriever, which operates in over 20 locations, and ecoenvelope, which provides reusable mailing products. For nearly 20 years, MailAgain has worked to develop mailing technologies focused on providing reliable, cost-effective, and USPS-approved solutions for reusable reply mail. Abitibi Paper Retriever® helps fund-raisers meet their goals by giving them the tools they need to collect paper for recycling. Ecoenvelope products eliminate the need to provide reply envelopes.



Figure 1: MailAgain’s reusable reply envelopes

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

MailAgain, in partnership with USPS, has created a series of products designed to reduce waste and increase sustainability. The company’s products include reusable courtesy reply envelopes, business reply envelopes and CD/DVD mailers (See Figure 1).

Each uses a patent-pending “fail safe loop mail” design that allows USPS to run the outbound and return portions on automation machinery.

Working with USPS Engineering, MailAgain obtained automation compatibility certification for its letter-sized CD/DVD mailers. Furthermore, MailAgain’s design eliminates the need for adding separate address labels or tabbing, streamlining production and returns for its customers. By creating a unique design, and by leveraging the Postal Service’s technological capabilities, MailAgain products help the mail go green, while simultaneously helping customers save money, time, and resources. Easy to implement, MailAgain offers operational savings to customers, while helping conserve precious environmental resources.

Abitibi Paper Retriever®’s Consolidated Recycling Division provides local non-profits with the chance to make a difference, and raise money, at no charge to the organization. Bright green and yellow containers are placed in highly visible, convenient areas where residents can drop off their newspaper, magazines, shopping catalogs and mail. Abitibi then provides the complementary collection service where paper is weighed. A monthly statement detailing the weight of paper collected for that month is accompanied by a check for the amount collected.

Recovered paper is then directed to processing centers where it is sorted into various grades and prepared for shipment. From there, it is routed to Abitibi's de-inking facilities and mills where it is used to manufacture recycled content newsprint. By diverting this paper from the waste stream, approximately 2.2 million cubic yards of landfill space is saved each year. In addition, by eliminating the groundwood and kraft pulping operations at certain newsprint mills, Abitibi reduces air emissions and wastewater discharges. This start-to-finish process is the kind of program with which the USPS is proud to partner (See Figure 2).



Figure 2: Abitibi's Paper Retriever®'s full-circle recycling program



Figure 3: Ecoenvelope Logo

In response to the growing interest in “green” products, a company called “ecoenvelopes” has developed a reusable envelope that eliminates the need for a separate reply mail envelope and helps conserve resources. The design gives mailers more flexibility for printing, distributing and mailing reusable envelopes.

Mailers used to be required to place the facing identification mark (FIM) on the reverse side of a reusable envelope, limiting the design and use of a window reusable envelope. Since permit imprint mailings don't pass through facer-canceller operations, the placement of a FIM on the address side of a reusable envelope doesn't affect mail processing operations. A recent mailing requirements change eliminates the need for a separate reply envelope — and that helps conserve precious resources.

When the return method is Business Reply Mail, the address block, barcode, legend, horizontal bars and No Postage Necessary indicia all appear through the same glassine window. With Courtesy Reply Mail, the return address and barcode are displayed through the window and the postage is affixed to the envelope as usual.

KEY FY07 ACHIEVEMENTS

While some people might doubt the positive impact a few envelopes or recycling containers can make, MailAgain, Abitibi, and ecoenvelope's numbers speak for themselves. Each time a MailAgain two-way envelope is used, one less business reply envelope needs to be manufactured - or disposed of. Similarly, each community that takes advantage of an Abitibi Paper Retriever® container is one less community that simply throws its recyclables in the trash. Each ecoenvelope eliminates the need for a separate business reply envelope. These are all simple equations, but the result is a substantial decrease in the use of energy, paper, and natural resources, particularly trees and water.

As the USPS outbound reply mail volume approaches 90 billion pieces this year, the mailing industry can make a significant environmental impact by embracing green technology. For example, for every billion reply envelopes eliminated, through two-way and reusable solutions, the savings are tremendous (See Table 1):

Table 1: Savings Per 1 Billion Reply Envelopes Eliminated

Quantity	Resource
1,072	Acres of Natural Forests
5,500	Tons of Paper
16,630	Cubic Yards of Landfill Waste
93,500	Trees
230,000	Tractor Trailer Loads of Mail
2,546,500	Gallons of Oil
3,228,000	Pounds of Air Pollution
15,279,000	Gallons of Fuel
38,241,500	Gallons of Water
22,423,500	Kilowatt Hours of Energy

MailAgain's contribution to environmental conservation is enhanced by the amount of recycled paper in its products, which reduces energy and resource use by 60% compared to virgin paper products. With electronic bill payment approaching 40% and direct mail response averaging less than 2%, mailers can make the smart decision to implement reusable solutions and save millions of dollars, while benefiting the environment.

The numbers don't just make sense for the environment, they make sense for USPS customers too. Using MailAgain's products eliminates the cost of purchasing a separate repositionable note, eliminates USPS special handling charges, and enables clients to coordinate exterior promotions with internal messaging through the patented window design.

- Cut envelope inventory and handling costs up to 50% - 1 million #9 envelopes occupy 750 cubic feet or eleven 4 x 4 x 4 skids
- Save approximately \$1 per thousand on inserting operations
- Reduce postage - up to \$240 per thousand - on variable page statement systems and direct mail programs, where the added weight of a second reply envelope incurs additional postage
- Leverage the "real estate" and mailing weight to expand market messaging or sell that space to compatible advertisers, often paying up to \$80 per thousand insertions

Statistics on Abitibi's Paper Retriever® program are equally impressive. Paper recycling is one of the most important elements of waste prevention by virtue of the sheer quantity in which paper is used. For example, everyday Americans buy 62 million newspapers and throw out 44 million. These kinds of numbers may seem daunting, but the benefits of recycled paper are reassuring:

- One ton of recycled paper uses: 64% less energy, 50% less water, generates 74% less air pollution and creates 5 times more jobs than one ton of paper products from virgin wood pulp
- One ton of de-inked pulp saves over 7000 gallons of water, 390 gallons of oil, and reduces air emissions by 60 lbs compared to traditional virgin fiber processes
- Abitibi-Consolidated Recycling Division and its Abitibi Paper Retriever® partners collect enough newspapers each year to completely cover 12,336 football fields in

paper one inch deep.

Furthermore, as going green becomes a priority for more and more Americans, the reputational benefit of using MailAgain, Abitibi, and ecoenvelope's products can help USPS customers attract more business and review, a bonus that is hard to quantify, but easy to appreciate.

CONCLUSION

The Postal Service continues to lead the way in developing new and innovative strategies to help protect our environment. Nearly 100 percent of the more than half a billion packages and envelopes supplied by the Postal Service each year are recyclable. The Postal Service acknowledges the challenges inherent in E.O. 13423 but is confident that partnerships like those with MailAgain, Abitibi, and ecoenvelope are a key to success. Presently, 4,000,000 pieces have been sent. DVD mailers, standard A envelopes with pre-paid and IBI postage. By setting goals for the future which will help the environment, while increasing the bottom line for USPS customers, the MailAgain, Abitibi, and ecoenvelope alliances are a key part of the Postal Service's effort to practice waste prevention.

By leveraging the technological capabilities of the USPS and combing them with the leading designs of the MailAgain, Abitibi, and ecoenvelope systems, customers, ranging from individuals to corporations, can feel good that they are saving money and the environment, all at the same time.