



Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

Audit Report

Informed Delivery Sign-Up Communication and Implementation

Report Number 20-237-R20 | July 24, 2020



*How do I sign up for
Informed Delivery?*

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Highlights

Objective

Our objective was to assess the effectiveness of the internal communication and implementation of *Informed Delivery* sign up at retail facilities. *Informed Delivery* is the U.S. Postal Service's offering that allows customers to digitally preview their letter mail and package delivery via email notifications, online dashboard, or mobile application.

The Postal Service rolled out *Informed Delivery* nationwide in April 2017 and, in doing so, provided instructions to retail window employees on how to explain the new service and direct customers to sign up through the Postal Service's *Informed Delivery* website.

Postal Service Headquarters staff from Corporate Communications and Delivery and Retail Operations managed the communication and distribution of information related to *Informed Delivery* sign up to Postal Service staff. Information was published in a variety of channels including the Postal Service's internal Blue Pages, *USPS Link*, *Retail Digest*, and emails, and were also communicated through standup talks, videos, and teleconferences.

Postal Service field staff monitored implementation of the sign up changes as part of their overall oversight of *Informed Delivery* deployment, which included mandatory training with information on how to sign up customers.

Our fieldwork was completed before the President of the United States issued the national emergency declaration concerning the novel coronavirus disease outbreak on March 13, 2020. The results of this audit do not reflect operational changes or service impacts that may have occurred throughout the Postal Service's operational network as a result of the pandemic.

Finding

The Postal Service's communication and implementation of *Informed Delivery* sign up was effective across nearly all retail locations we tested. We noted window employees at 33 of 34 (97 percent) of the randomly selected retail units we visited correctly referred us to the Postal Service's *Informed Delivery* website when asked about how to sign up for *Informed Delivery*. At one site where the employee incorrectly responded to our inquiry, local management took immediate corrective actions to reiterate the process for replying to customers asking how to sign up for *Informed Delivery*.

Postal Service managers and staff we spoke with at the headquarters, area, district, and local levels attributed these positive results to the quality of communication and implementation provided.

Recommendations

We made no recommendations in this report. We will continue to monitor communication and implementation of these and other key operational changes and may perform additional work in the future.

Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

July 24, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR: JANICE WALKER
VICE PRESIDENT, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

KEVIN MCADAMS
VICE PRESIDENT, DELIVERY AND RETAIL OPERATIONS

A digital signature of Janet M. Sorensen, showing her name in a cursive font over a white background with a small icon in the top right corner.

FROM: Janet M. Sorensen
Deputy Assistant Inspector General
for Retail, Delivery and Marketing

SUBJECT: Audit Report – *Informed Delivery* Sign-Up Communication
and Implementation (Report Number 20-237-R20)

This report presents the results of our audit of *Informed Delivery* Sign-Up Communication and Implementation.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Joe Wolski, Director, Sales, Marketing and International, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit Response Management

Results

Introduction/Objective

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of *Informed Delivery* Sign-Up Communication and Implementation (Project Number 20-237). Our objective was to assess the effectiveness of the internal communication and implementation of *Informed Delivery* sign up at retail facilities. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information.

Our fieldwork was completed before the President of the United States issued the national emergency declaration concerning the novel coronavirus disease outbreak (COVID-19) on March 13, 2020. The results of this audit do not reflect operational changes or service impacts that may have occurred throughout the Postal Service's operational network as a result of the pandemic.

Background

The Postal Service deployed its *Informed Delivery* service in April 2017. *Informed Delivery* allows customers to digitally preview their letter mail and package delivery via email notifications, online dashboard, or mobile application. The Postal Service subsequently provided guidance to retail window employees¹ on how to explain the new service and direct customers to sign up through the Postal Service's *Informed Delivery* website.

As this new service offering was being finalized, Postal Service leadership across multiple organizations (such as Corporate Communications and Delivery and Retail Operations) developed the following:

- **Communication strategy** for notifying Postal Service staff (those at the area, district, and local levels) of these new changes and determining the following:
 - Channels – the mechanisms for conveying messages can include hardcopy mailings, emails, newsletters, videos, memos, or teleconferences.
 - Messaging – the detail, descriptions, format, and presentation of the messaging.

- Frequency – how frequently the messaging is communicated.
 - Timing – the timing of the messaging, including how much lead time is provided between messaging and implementation.
- **Implementation strategy** for ensuring Postal Service staff were aware of, and complied with, the changes.


Postal Service Headquarters staff from Corporate Communications and Delivery and Retail Operations managed the communication and distribution of information related to *Informed Delivery* sign up to Postal Service staff. Information was published in a variety of channels including the Postal Service's internal Blue Pages, *USPS Link*, *Retail Digest*, area and district newsletters, hardcopy mail, and emails (see example in [Figure 1](#)). Additional information was also communicated through standup talks, videos, and teleconferences.

“Informed Delivery allows customers to digitally preview their letter mail and package delivery via email notifications, online dashboard, or mobile application.”



¹ We used the term “employee” or “window employee” throughout this report to reflect the Postal Service clerk, supervisor, postmaster, or other Postal Service staff who conducted the transaction at the retail window. We randomly selected retail units for mystery shops within each of the Postal Service's seven geographic area offices.

Figure 1. Postal Service Retail Digest Excerpts on *Informed Delivery* Sign Up

RETAIL DIGEST <i>Inform. Engage. Achieve.</i> 	
April 25, 2017 Weekly Messages from Retail & Customer Service Operations	
Contents	
<i>Be sure to share/distribute a copy of this week's Retail Digest to all retail associates!</i>	
As Information	<p style="text-align: center;">Informed Delivery® Launched Nationally</p> <p>If it's in your mail, it's in your email. This is the concept behind Informed Delivery, a new feature from the Postal Service® that provides residential consumers with digital previews of their incoming mail. USPS® completed the national rollout of the free, optional feature late last week. Consumers in 31,000 ZIP Codes™ are now eligible for the feature. Informed Delivery users receive images of the outside of their household's letter-sized mailpieces soon before they arrive in their physical mailboxes. These images can be viewed via email, or they can be accessed on an online dashboard. The Postal Service is encouraging consumers to sign up at informedelivery.usps.com. After signing up, users will begin receiving notifications within a few days. USPS is also encouraging employees to sign up and use the feature first-hand. Signing up is voluntary and must be completed off the clock.</p> <p>What should you do if you receive questions about Informed Delivery?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you encounter a consumer who is <i>not</i> signed up for the feature, direct him or her to informedelivery.usps.com. At this site, potential users can check if Informed Delivery is available in their ZIP Code. They also can sign up for the feature, view FAQs and more.

Source: Excerpts of the Postal Service's April 27, 2017, Retail Digest.

Postal Service field staff then monitored the implementation of the sign-up changes as part of their overall oversight of *Informed Delivery* deployment, which included mandatory training with information on how to sign customers up for *Informed Delivery*.

Finding #1: *Informed Delivery* Sign Up Communication and Implementation

The Postal Service's communication and implementation of *Informed Delivery* sign up was effective across nearly all retail locations we tested. We noted window employees at 33 of 34 (97 percent) of the randomly selected retail units we visited correctly referred us to the Postal Service's *Informed Delivery* website when asked about how to sign up for *Informed Delivery* (see Table 1). There were no material performance differences between urban and rural units—19 of 20 employees in urban offices passed the test while all 14 of 14 employees at rural units passed the test.

“The Postal Service’s communication and implementation of Informed Delivery sign up was effective across nearly all retail locations we tested.”

OIG Mystery Shops

We approached the retail window employee and asked how to sign up for *Informed Delivery*. If the employee directed us to the *Informed Delivery* website, we considered that a “passing” transaction; if the employee did not direct us to the website, we considered that a “failing” transaction.

Table 1. Informed Delivery Sign Up Mystery Shop Results

Retail Unit	Urban or Rural Designation	Result (Pass or Fail)
Albany District – Northeast Area		
Delmar	Urban	Pass
East Berne	Rural	Pass
Feura Bush	Rural	Pass
Glenmont	Urban	Pass
Colorado/Wyoming District – Western Area		
Eagleview Broomfield	Urban	Pass
Eastlake	Urban	Pass
Golden	Urban	Pass
Harris Park	Urban	Pass
Idledale	Rural	Pass
Indian Hills	Rural	Pass
Westminster	Urban	Pass
Greater Michigan District – Great Lakes Area		
Caledonia	Urban	Pass
Centerpointe	Urban	Fail
Hickory Corners	Rural	Pass
Stanton	Rural	Pass
Ohio Valley District – Eastern Area		
Burlington	Rural	Pass
Harrison	Urban	Pass

Retail Unit	Urban or Rural Designation	Result (Pass or Fail)
Hebron	Urban	Pass
Petersburg	Rural	Pass
Westwood	Urban	Pass
Richmond District – Capital Metro Area		
East End	Urban	Pass
Providence Forge	Rural	Pass
Quinton	Rural	Pass
Regency	Urban	Pass
San Diego District – Pacific Area		
Brooks Street	Urban	Pass
First Street	Urban	Pass
Rancho Del Rey	Urban	Pass
Valley Center	Rural	Pass
William Taft	Urban	Pass
Suncoast District – Southern Area		
Balm	Rural	Pass
Durant	Rural	Pass
Lithia	Urban	Pass
Sun City Center	Urban	Pass
Wimauma	Urban	Pass

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) mystery shop visits.

We discussed these results with Postal Service management and staff at various levels throughout the organization—headquarters, areas, districts, and local units. The window employee at one unit that failed our test stated they were not familiar with the sign-up process for *Informed Delivery*. Local management at this location recognized this error and took immediate corrective actions to reiterate the process for replying to customers inquiring about the sign up for *Informed Delivery*.

“Postal Service management and staff attributed the positive test results to the quality of communication and implementation provided on these Informed Delivery sign up procedures.”

Postal Service management and staff attributed the positive test results to the quality of communication and implementation provided on these *Informed Delivery* sign up procedures. They consistently stated they viewed the communication of information from both headquarters and their respective supervisors on the *Informed Delivery* sign up changes as sufficient (for example, district staff stated they received sufficient information from the area and local managers stated they received sufficient information from the district).

The managers in the field often supplemented the information provided with their own communication strategies, such

as teleconferences, stand-up talks, memos, or emails. The field staff also stated they had sufficient flexibility to customize their respective communication—for example, if a certain district wanted to use more stand-up talks or add additional instruction, they could do so. Regarding implementation monitoring, headquarters established a mandatory training course in September 2019 that included information on how to sign up customers for *Informed Delivery*. Field staff stated they periodically confirmed that employees were aware of the *Informed Delivery* sign up processes.

We are not making recommendations based on the overall positive results of our testing and expect the Postal Service to continue reminding retail window employees about the correct way to reply to customers asking to sign up for *Informed Delivery*. We will continue to monitor the communication and implementation of these and other key operational changes and may perform additional work in the future.

Management’s Comments

Management agreed with the finding and stated they will continue to engage employees for increasing the visibility and participation rate of *Informed Delivery*.

See [Appendix B](#) for management’s comments in their entirety.

Evaluation of Management’s Comments

The OIG considers management’s comments responsive to the finding in the report.

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Appendix A: Additional Information

Scope and Methodology

Our objective was to assess the effectiveness of the internal communication and implementation of *Informed Delivery* sign up in retail facilities. To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed the overall framework for internally communicating and implementing *Informed Delivery* sign up procedures from headquarters throughout the field. This included reviewing relevant strategies, policies, procedures, roles, and responsibilities.
- Reviewed various channels used by the Postal Service to communicate *Informed Delivery* sign up procedures throughout the retail network, including *Retail Digest*, *USPS Link*, and internal newsletters as well as other components of their communication strategy related to messaging, timeliness, and frequency.
- Reviewed actions used by the Postal Service to ensure that Postal Service staff were aware of, and complied with, the respective *Informed Delivery* sign up changes.
- Performed mystery shops at select retail units in urban and rural locations throughout the country to selectively test the effectiveness of the communication and implementation strategies related to the *Informed Delivery* sign up procedures. In selecting these units, we first randomly selected one district within each of the seven Postal Service areas. We then randomly selected a mix of urban and rural retail units within a 30-mile radius of the address of the district office, adding six retail sites that appeared along the line of travel or had supervisors that were responsible for the smaller units we visited. We used the Postal Service's Retail Data Mart (RDM) and Facilities Database for retail unit information (such as unit name, address, and ZIP Code) and U.S. Census Bureau information on ZIP Code urban and rural designations.

We performed mystery shop tests at 34 units between October 2019 and February 2020.² The *Informed Delivery* sign up test entailed asking retail window employees on how to sign up for *Informed Delivery*. If the employee directed us to the *Informed Delivery* website, we considered that a “passing” transaction; if the employee did not direct us to the website, we considered that a “failing” transaction.

We also conducted follow-up interviews with the supervisors or postmasters at 33³ of these locations, discussing the results of our mystery shops in their locations and their perspectives, roles, and activities in the communication and implementation of the *Informed Delivery* sign up changes.

- Interviewed managers at Postal Service Headquarters, the seven areas, and the seven districts about the results of our mystery shops in their locations and their perspectives, roles, and activities in the communication and implementation of the *Informed Delivery* sign up procedures.
- Reviewed customer complaints in the Postal Service's Enterprise Customer Care system related to *Informed Delivery* sign up.
- Reviewed literature from Gartner, Forbes, and other sources related to leading practices for effectively communicating and implementing operational changes throughout an organization. We also met with representatives from Gartner to discuss these leading practices in more detail.

We conducted this performance audit from October 2019 through July 2020 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 objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

² We did not conduct any mystery shops between late November and early January due to the holiday mailing season.

³ We conducted interviews at 33 of the 34 mystery shopped units—we did not have a follow-up discussion with staff at one unit (Valley Center).

We assessed the reliability of the computer-generated data we collected from the Postal Service’s RDM, Facilities Database, and Enterprise Customer Care system by reviewing the data for errors and discussing potential issues with Postal Service officials. We determined that the data was sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

The OIG did not identify any prior audits or reviews related to the objective of this audit within the last five years.

Appendix B: Management's Comments



July 16, 2020

LAZERICK C. POLAND
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Informed Delivery Sign Up Communication and Implementation
Project Number 20-237-DRAFT

This letter is in response to OIG Audit: Informed Delivery Sign Up Communication and Implementation. While there were no Recommendations associated with this report and only a single finding meant to acknowledge the effectiveness of the Postal Service's sign up efforts, Management appreciates the opportunity to address the contents.

The report reiterates the various channels employed by management to communicate and distribute Informed Delivery sign up. Some of those recognized in the audit include: the Postal Service's internal Blue Pages, USPS Link, Retail Digest, area and district newsletters, hardcopy mail and emails. Additional information was also relayed to employees through the use of standup talks, videos, and teleconferences.

Management recognizes the value of developing a strong knowledge base in its employees and will continue to engage that as a resource for increasing the visibility and participation rate of this value-added service.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Janice Walker".

Janice Walker
Vice President, Corporate Communications

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin L. McAdams".

Kevin L. McAdams
Vice President, Delivery and Retail Operations

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management

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