

Improving Address Data: Challenges & Solutions for Address Data Management

BEST PRACTICES FOR ADDRESS DATA MANAGEMENT SERIES



white paper



QualifiedAddress

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For companies that maintain mailing lists with street addresses, keeping accurate and up-to-date address data for contacts has always been a concern. As mailing costs continue to increase, it is becoming more and more important for organizations to reduce their returned mail and improve the effectiveness of their mailing lists. The solution is an address data management service that verifies the accuracy of addresses and standardizes them to accepted postal service standards.

The Challenges of Address List Management

Incomplete, incorrect, and outdated address data can lead to missed contacts, increased costs, and inefficient communication.

Organizations that use address data face significant, costly data management challenges that reduce the effectiveness and increase the costs of communication with their contacts.

Incomplete Address Data: Missing ZIP Codes, +4 codes, company names, apartment or suite numbers, and other segments of an address are common problems and lead to missed opportunities for an organization. Whether it loses an opportunity to follow-up on a sale with a customer or is unable to deliver a product ordered, a company's ability to communicate with contacts in its lists is impaired by incomplete address data.

Incorrect Address Data: Address data is highly susceptible to mistakes. Since the source of the data could be almost anyone, including customers and sales representatives, mistakes are common. The street name could be misspelled. An unacceptable city name could be entered. The wrong ZIP Code might be provided. Whatever the case, incorrect data in an address database will result in a higher percentage of undeliverable mail.

Outdated Address Data: Sure, a customer might file a change of address with the post office but wouldn't it be nice if a company could be notified of the change before sending out a mailing? How about knowing if a ZIP Code or street name has changed? Mailings sent with outdated address data may make it to contacts eventually, but it will require extra time to be processed and forwarded. Outdated address data is a problem especially worrisome for companies that send out time-sensitive mailings.

Updating Postal Service Data: Some companies have already implemented internal processes to validate their addresses. In these cases, maintenance becomes an issue. Address data can be very dynamic. Postal codes are added and removed. Homes are built and new streets and addresses are created. Street names and city names can even change. Most postal service agencies release updated data monthly. Companies that use this data to validate addresses must update it monthly to keep it current. Some may decide not to update it and validate their addresses with outdated data determining that some validation is better than no validation. In any case, keeping postal service data current is an issue that all organizations that work with address data face.

A solution that can validate and standardize address data with low overhead and maintenance is needed.

Solutions for Address Management Concerns

Address standardization and verification services are used by organizations to maintain up-to-date address databases. These tools process address lists and correct mistakes, fill in missing address data, and update addresses with changes. These solutions use address data from postal service agencies such as the United States Postal Service® to scrub and standardize addresses. Since these data files are updated monthly, it is important for companies to choose services that provide data updates on a monthly or bi-monthly schedule.

In order to maintain the integrity of the information in an address database, it is important to catch potential problems with address data quickly and validate this information often. Many companies will use batch processing to update the data in their databases. While this solution alone will catch and correct many incorrect, outdated, or incomplete addresses, validating an address at the time of entry will vastly improve the effectiveness of batch address processing. Address Entry Validation™ can eliminate addresses that cannot be fixed by batch processing and assist organizations with developing completely verified and standard-

ized address databases. Figure 1 demonstrates an effective process for companies looking to obtain and maintain accurate address data.

Figure 1: Best practices for obtaining and maintaining an accurate address database.



The Benefits of Address Entry & Batch Cleaning

Address standardization and validation services overcome many of the difficulties that companies encounter when managing address databases. This is especially true when Address Entry Validation™ is combined with batch processing.

Reduced Returned Mail: By validating that an address is correct before sending out a mailing, organizations will reduce the amount of undeliverable mail that is returned. Depending on the size and frequency of mailings, this validation can lead to significant savings for organizations.

Improved Quality of Address Data: Validating that an address is correct at the time it is entered into your database and then using batch processing to regularly clean, verify, and update the address list will help organizations achieve significant improvements in address data quality.

Improved Communication with Customers: Organizations depend on effective communication with customers to survive. Using services that verify and standardize the customers' addresses will improve your ability to communicate with customers via postal mail and open opportunities that

may have otherwise been lost. Organizations that use address verification and standardization services are able to communicate with customers via mail faster and cheaper than organizations that do not use these services.

Reduced Mailing Costs: Many address standardization services will provide organizations with ZIP + 4™ and USPS® barcodes to enable them to qualify for discounts on mailings. Other postal services, such as Canada Post, also offer similar discounts for qualified mailings.

Increased Delivery Speed: By providing the USPS® with addresses in a standardized format and including information such as ZIP + 4™ codes, the post office states that companies can increase the delivery of their mail by one to two days.

The Qualified Address Solution: Qualified Address Scrubbing

One of Qualified Address's address standardization and verification solutions is Qualified Address Scrubbing™. This solution uses official postal data from postal authorities to validate the accuracy of address data without requiring customers to invest in additional hardware or software. Qualified Address Scrubbing gives customers unprecedented control over how and when their address verification and standardization is accomplished.

How Qualified Address Scrubbing Works

Qualified Address Scrubbing can be accessed by customers either at the time of entry using Address Entry Validation™ or by processing the address data in batches. Addresses submitted to the engine are verified, standardized, and returned to the customer in the format that the customer requests.

Qualified Address Scrubbing: Batch Processing: With Qualified Address Batch Processing, customers are able to upload their address lists to the QualifiedAddress.com secure server. The customer then maps the columns in their database using a user-friendly wizard and submits the list to the processing queue. Addresses are then run through the Qualified Address Scrubbing Engine™, where they are veri-

fied and standardized. Customers are notified via email when their list is finished (usually within a few hours) at which point the customer can download the list in a variety of formats from their account. Figure 2 shows how Qualified Address batch processing works.

Figure 2: The process for cleaning addresses using Qualified Address Scrubbing: Batch Processing.



Qualified Address Scrubbing: Address Entry Validation API:

The Address Entry Validation API™ allows customers to submit addresses to the Qualified Address Scrubbing Engine™ in real time and receive an immediate answer from the engine using Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP). This API can be integrated into websites or any application or database that is able to access the Qualified Address Scrubbing Engine. Figure 3 gives an example of how the API might be used in a call center environment.

Figure 3: An example of how the Address Entry Validation API might be used in a call center.



Qualified Address Scrubbing Key Benefits

Qualified Address Scrubbing offers all the key benefits of address verification and standardization solutions: reduced returned mail, improved quality of address data, improved communication with customers, reduced mailing costs, and increased delivery speeds. Along with these standard benefits, the solution from Qualified Address offers many additional benefits, which include:

No additional hardware costs: Qualified Address Scrubbing™ offers the same benefits of other address verification and standardization solutions without requiring customers to invest in expensive hardware to maintain large databases of postal service data.

Elimination of time and effort spent on updating data: To obtain the most up-to-date data available a company would have to update its postal databases monthly when the postal authorities release updated data. Since the address verification and standardization is completed on Qualified Address's servers, it takes care of all data updates, thereby eliminating the time and effort that companies have to invest in keeping current data.

Fast Turnaround Time: Many address list services take anywhere from three days to two weeks to process submitted address lists. The technology that powers the Qualified Address Scrubbing Engine allows it to process addresses rapidly and immediately, thus allowing customers to receive batch processes in hours instead of days. Priority processing is also available for customers who need lists moved up in the queue.

High Reliability and Quality of Service: Qualified Address has taken extensive measures to ensure that customers can depend on its services to be reliable. The company is continually looking for ways that its address matching can be improved and enhanced. It also prides itself in offering some of the most extensive customer service options available in the industry.

Can Be Accessed By Multiple Users: Organizations that

use more than one employee to manage their address data run into difficulties with desktop software. Because the services provided by Qualified Address are web-based services, all employees at a company who need access to the address management services will be able to login and finish their assignments.

Secure Processing: Qualified Address understands the proprietary nature of address lists. That's why it has gone to extreme measures to ensure that the data being processed on its servers is protected by some of the most advanced technology available.

Scaleable Services: The services offered through QualifiedAddress.com were created to be extremely scalable so whether a customer needs to have 500 addresses or 10 million addresses scrubbed, there is an affordable solution available.

Conclusion

Any organization that works with address data can depend on Qualified Address Scrubbing to help it overcome many of the challenges that come with managing these databases. By reducing returned mail, improving the quality of address data, improving communication with customers, reducing mailing costs, and increasing delivery speeds customers will see the immediate impact of the Qualified Address services on their bottom line. Qualified Address is excited to be on the forefront of innovation in on-demand address database management.

To find out more about our address verification and standardization solutions, visit www.QualifiedAddress.com.



3214 N University Ave, Suite 221
Provo, UT 84604

www.qualifiedaddress.com