

Willowbend Takes Doorhanging “Way Beyond” Simple Radius Mentality

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(Note: Jim Schell previously owned and operated Adventi Media, an AAPS member and national distribution company in Dallas. He is a past president of AAPS and is now Senior Vice President of Business Development for AAPS member Willowbend Corporation, Dallas. He will provide additional information about the technology available to improve distribution at the AAPS Conference in Scottsdale, April 21-24. He can be reached at jschell@willowbend.com)

I really had to think long and hard about what’s new in the way of “art and science” in distribution. I’ve talked over the years about GPS technology and its ability to aid in the delivery process, plus provide verification of distribution. I’ve talked about new mapping platforms that allow identification of neighborhoods based on demographics, etc.

Most of the sophisticated distributors and brokers have invested in some form of mapping and GPS tracking. I haven’t run into a customer that doesn’t require GPS and pretty much expects some mapping proficiency.

What is relatively new in our world at Willowbend, has been applying data hygiene and geospatial analysis to our customer’s CRM data. In the world of “Big Data”...we all know that the data we have on our customers is golden. Companies actually look at their CRM as a defined “asset”. And an asset it is!

What is unknown to most managers about their CRM data is that it is full of garbage postal address information. Some of this is due to input errors, bad addressing, and simply the aging of data and its impact on quality. Let me explain. Even if a company goes to great lengths to capture client data accurately, in the case of address information, it can change as much as 15% a year. The USPS does major overhauls to their address systems twice a year. We saw almost a 100% Zip Code realignment in Phoenix just over a year ago. Guess what? If this data isn’t kept up to date...most of the Zips in the address data for Phoenix in the CRM database are bad. Willowbend cleans this mess up for companies and keeps it current. And we insure all address data captured enterprise wide is correct to start with. The impact on operations and the value of the CRM “asset” is improved greatly.

When we clean up CRM address data, our clients usually want us to perform geospatial analysis as well. This first starts with geocoding all the address data. We have a proprietary database of over 177 million residential and business addresses in the U.S. Most all of them have been geocoded. A lot of the commercial geocoding products in the market do what we call a “best match”. This results in relatively good longitude and latitude coordinates most of the time. However, how many times have you entered an address in your car’s navigation system and it takes you somewhere other than the intended destination? It happens a lot. Google Maps for example will always give you a set of coordinates, even when they don’t have the exact set for a particular address. They might give you the geo-coordinates for the Zip

Code, the City, State...hell, they might even give you the centroid of the U.S. Which is in Iowa...and there is a farmhouse located there that regularly receives shipments based on bad geocoding. It's true!

Willowbend only appends accurate geocodes to perform geospatial analysis. Why? We want accurate results. Especially, if we are trying to identify a trade pattern for a local Yoga studio, or tanning salon. We use customer address data to accurately define the best areas to deliver door hangers. Yep...I finally brought all this bull back to door hangers!

Since all our address data is demographically appended...we can even profile their customers and determine best prospecting areas using the "birds of a feather" logic. This takes door hanging way beyond "simple radius" mentality. We've even profiled based on spend levels, products purchased, etc., to come up with more refined messaging on the hangers themselves.

All of our work is done at the address level, so, we can easily incorporate direct mail as part of the overall media plan. And now, using these same addresses, we can append IP address data about half the time. We are now incorporating targeted digital IP display to compliment the print distribution. It is really "amps" up the response and average buy rates.

And who says door to door is dead...far from it! And now we can integrate other media into our offerings, including digital. It all starts with targeting the right customers, which leverages client CRM data...assuming it can be cleaned up!

Now you know a new way we are incorporating "science" (CRM data) into the art of distribution...