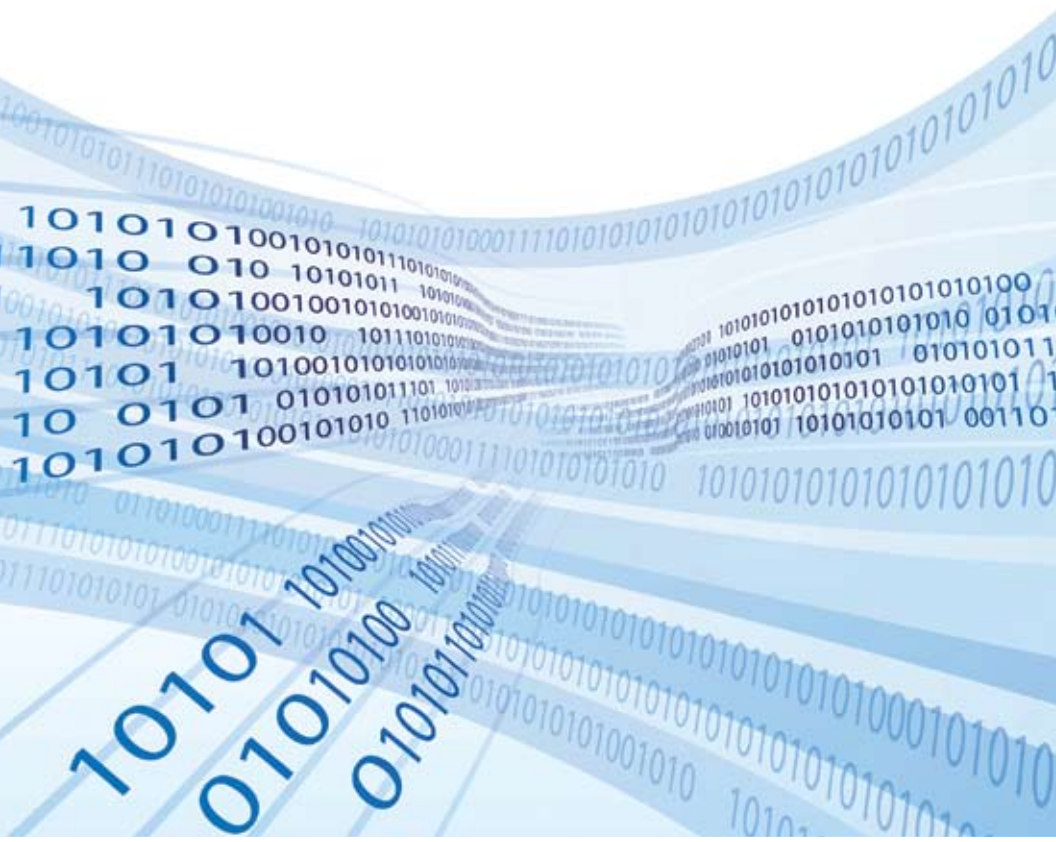


STANDARD DATA PROCESSING PRACTICES FOR DIRECT MAIL

(Best Practices in a World of Change)



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INPUT PROCESSING

Data is an extremely important component to the success of a mailing, but many people are not aware of some critical aspects in preparing lists and data files for mailing output. This guide is intended to address common questions and take some of the mystery out of data processing. We hope these quick tips, best practices and simple explanations will bring important data processing considerations to light prior to even submitting your data to a vendor for processing. Keep in mind that although this brochure describes standard EU Services processes, you will find that many of the same practices are utilized throughout the industry.

INPUT PROCESSING

What file formats can I provide?

EU Services is very flexible in the formats we can handle. We can handle almost any structured data format. The most common formats are:

- Fixed Length Flat Files
- Delimited Files
- Database Files (mdb, dbf, etc)
- Excel* (maximum 65,536 records in each tab)

*beware there are some issues with storing data in this format

We can also handle most types of media:

- CD
- DVD
- Electronic File Transfer

What other information should I provide with my data?

Here are some best practices to follow.

1. Only include the data necessary for the project. Including extraneous data and personal information can increase security risks, complicate the process and increase the chances for mistakes.

LIST HYGIENE

2. All data files need a layout, which is a description of the way the data is structured in the data file. You should have either field headings within the data file or an external list of fields and data types.
3. Provide detailed instructions about what fields should be used in the mailing and data processing.
4. Clearly name the lists so there are no misunderstandings. Mailing_List.csv is not very descriptive. October_Mailing_Prospect.csv is much clearer.
5. When sending in multiple lists for a project, include a list of your lists with file names, expected quantities and assigned codes, if applicable. This is a critical element for the success of the project. It's also a good idea to prioritize your lists by providing a ranking order. This will help in the merge/purge process so your vendor knows which file the name should stay on if there are duplicate names.
6. Clearly communicate the expected quantities. There are many reasons a file could become corrupted or shortened. A critical step in our quality control is to be able to confirm the actual quantities against the expected quantities.

How do you make sure the right files are used for a project?

Many of the best practices detailed above help a vendor to make sure the right files are used for the right project. At EU Services, we have extensive processes and procedures to properly link the right data to the right project. This includes quality control reporting that details the file names and quantities received for every project. This reporting is the quality assurance (Q/A) letter that is e-mailed at the initial stages of data processing work. If you have questions about the way the data is handled, ask for a detailed explanation of how the data is controlled through our quality control and data processing process.

LIST HYGIENE

What is CASS? What do I need to know about it?

CASS is the processing of address information against the USPS zip+4 database, which is required for all mailings at automation rates and carrier route rates. This process must be run within 90 days for carrier route mailings and 180 days for automation mailings.

LIST HYGIENE

There are some key things that you should understand about the process.

1. As part of the matching process, the software will change address lines, zip codes and/or cities in some addresses. For some marketing organizations, this might be an issue if there are people on the lists who identify their city differently than the USPS does. This occurs primarily in areas where it is more prestigious to have one city name over another. This can be fixed, but as a standard practice EU Services will allow the software to make these changes to cities.

EU Services allows the software to change cities to USPS-suggested cities when there is a discrepancy.

2. As part of the process, address standardization also occurs. The software will change the format of addresses to match the USPS standards. Street becomes St and extraneous information that may be in the address is removed.

EU Services allows address standardization.

3. The USPS standard preferred address format places the primary delivery address right above the city state zip line. In this format, an address with a apartment would look like this:

USPS preferred format	EU Services Standard Format
John Q Sample	John Q Sample
Apt 2B	123 Main St
123 Main St	Apt 2B
Anytown, MD 20850	Anytown, MD 20850

This USPS format is not the preferred format for many of our customers and we correct this as part of our standard processing through CASS. This can be changed upon request.

EU Services formats addresses to list the primary delivery address below the recipient name (see above example).

LIST HYGIENE

Should I have the DPV records removed? What Is EU's standard process?

Delivery Point Validation (DPV) has been a requirement for automation mailings since August 1, 2007. Records that are not verified during the DPV processing part of the CASS process have the zip+4 elements stripped. This is because the USPS feels that if a record does not match to a known address within the USPS database, it is likely that this address is undeliverable and it should not be eligible for automation discounts. As a standard, EU Services leaves these records in a mailing. Depending on the type of mailing and your level of certainty about the deliverability of the addresses, you should carefully consider the cost and benefits of mailing these names versus removing them.

EU offers two options for removing potentially undeliverable records identified during the CASS process. We can remove just the records that failed DPV. Or we can remove the DPV failures and any records that have CASS error codes that indicate the records are likely to be undeliverable. EU Services will provide an excel spreadsheet of the DPV record and the CASS error codes records upon request.

Records that are not verified during delivery point validation (DPV) processing WILL BE INCLUDED in a mailing unless otherwise specified.

Explain the NCOA process. Does it capture everyone who moves?

National Change of Address (NCOA) is the matching of a name and address file against the USPS's database of the past 48 months of move information on approximately 160 million addresses. The NCOA system returns a great deal of useful information for mailers. When there is a match, the new address is returned. There are also return codes that indicate either a partial match or if there is a move and no updated move information has been provided. When processing NCOA, EU provides a detailed report on the records that moved and the records that have been dropped during the process. We can also provide a list of the updated addresses and those records with return codes upon request.

There are some limitations to the NCOA process. The USPS collects most of the change of address updates from voluntary information filed by people when they move. In the current

LIST HYGIENE

USPS database, 13% of movers have not left forwarding information. Similarly, many business moves are not captured in the current NCOA system.

EU Services will provide a detailed report on the records that moved and the records that have been dropped during the NCOA process.

What is a Nixie and do I care about them?

“Nixies” is a term for the addresses that come out of NCOA with a return code indicating the possibility of a moved or undeliverable record. These records should be considered in the same way as a DPV failure, since they might be mailable or undeliverable. Carefully consider whether or not to mail these names. They may be a good candidate for removal if you need to reduce names in a test segment or mailing.

I have a file in all upper case. Can you convert it to proper upper-lower case format? Are there any issues I should be concerned about in this process?

This is one of the elements that is often overlooked but can be critical to the personalization of mailings. There are functions that exist even in applications like Excel which will convert the first character in each word to upper case and the rest to lower. However, this does not work with abbreviations like IBM or Scottish names like McGregor. The key to a successful conversion lies with a system that has built-in intelligence to handle exceptions to the rule. EU utilizes a system that takes into account most of the standard companies and surnames, so this conversion can be accomplished.

EU Services convert files to upper-lower case format using a system that accommodates unique company and surnames that contain additional capital letters.

GENERAL INFORMATION

How does Merge Purge work? Can I tweak the settings to make the match more rigid or more flexible?

EU uses a keyline, which enables matching logic that allows us to efficiently compare names and address components. This process takes key elements from name and address information and creates a match code to compare with the match codes of the other records. The system is designed to take into account common misspellings and other elements that can reduce the effectiveness of the match rate. The process can be customized to make the match more rigid or more flexible depending on the specific needs. This is something that you will want to discuss in detail with your data processing vendor.

EU Services finds duplicate records based on a keyline, which is a code built from key name and address elements.

GENERAL INFORMATION

I see some data that is potentially bad in my proofs. Why is this?

The purpose of proofs is to provide the most accurate representation of the mailing as possible. Most data sets, no matter how well maintained, contain records with some type of error or format problem. As a standard procedure, EU Services produces a subset of records to proof projects on the various output devices. Contained in this subset is the shortest name, the longest name, the fewest number of address lines, and the greatest number of address lines. Looking at the extremes in the data will often help to pinpoint potential data quality problems. If there are concerns over a data issue in a proof, it is the final chance to address the issues and develop a plan to fix the data before the project progresses.

EU Services produces a subset of records, including the longest and shortest values of a field, to proof projects on the various output devices.

GENERAL INFORMATION

My data is very clean. Why do I need to provide defaults for things like dollar amount calculations and salutations?

Even the cleanest data files often still contain unexpected values that will not fit the personalization rules. Additionally, processes like name parsing aren't always capable of isolating every name component. When default values are not specified at the start, the project will stop during programming. If this is specified as a desired step in the process, we will plan for a proof step where the variable values are confirmed. Otherwise, the job schedule may be disrupted while these questions are answered prior to generating a proof. A best practice is to identify the acceptable ranges of values, such as names for salutations and dollar amounts for gift calculations. If there are elements outside of these ranges, such as a blank first name field for a first name salutation, what should the next step be? When planning a direct mail package, these types of "what-if" scenarios should be taken into consideration and added to your instructions.

Can you explain how seed names are processed? I have noticed that my seeds sometimes have additional data. Why?

Seed names can be very tricky, particularly in projects that incorporate complicated personalization. When projects have multiple segments and creative versions, all the data elements are needed in the list to drive the segments, versions and/or personalization. However, the seed names often come from a different source than the rest of the mailing and usually have only rudimentary name and address information. To generate mail pieces for these incomplete seed records, EU "clones" data from real records within the mailing. This process copies the critical data elements of the seeds (name, address) and adds them to a copy of a real data record in a mailing. This insures that any and all values necessary for driving the package function correctly.



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