

Reduce Direct Mailing Errors With Web-Based Address Lookup

▲ By installing address lookup software in its Internet-enabled POS system, Meineke Car Care Centers, Inc. improved the accuracy of the mailing addresses for its direct mail marketing campaigns.

by Kristen Chapin

Advancements in media technology have created a bevy of avenues to reach the consumer with advertising: television, movies, DVDs, and CDs, and, of course, the Internet. But despite this range of options, direct mail is still prevalent in retailers' advertising strategies. Meineke Car Care Centers, Inc., a \$400 million automobile service provider, is no different. It operates 900 franchises throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala, Venezuela, and the Caribbean. A large portion of its customer relationship building is done through direct mail campaigns, such as sending customers notices of sales promotions and reminders that it is time to have their oil changed, brakes checked, etc.

At Meineke, the address information for these mail pieces is collected by store employees. When a customer brings his or her car in for service, an employee asks for and keys in the customer's name, address, and phone number.



Meineke included reverse address lookup software from TARGUSInfo in the POS upgrade that it will offer its franchisees.

Sometimes that information would be incorrect, either because it was miskeyed or the employee didn't correctly understand the customer. That miscommunication had a noticeable effect, says Jim Meeks, vice president of IT for Meineke. "Fifteen percent to 20% of the direct mail pieces were being returned as undeliverable," he says.

Meineke was developing a POS upgrade, which would include full-time Internet access, to offer its shops. "When we decided to upgrade, we outlined a strategic vision that would take advantage of Web-based services, like telephone number lookup and online training courses. We wanted to give the shops more ways to use the Internet connection than for POS functions alone," explains Meeks.

Collect Accurate Address Information With A Phone Number

Meineke discovered TARGUSInfo, a service that links phone numbers from a database of 1.5 billion with consumer information in real time during the transaction. When a customer comes into a shop, an employee asks for the customer's phone number and keys it in, and the address lookup software returns the customer's name and mailing address information. That data is used for Meineke's direct mailings, enabling the mail sent to shops' customers to be addressed more accurately.

Because the address capability requires a direct Internet connection, it can only be used by Meineke shops with the new POS system, which about 225 shops have purchased so far. But Meeks doesn't think it will take long for other shops to follow suit. "The shops pay into a general advertising fund, so if they aren't collecting the most correct information, that money isn't being used effectively," he says. "It's another good incentive to invest in the new system." □

Installation Profile

Technology User: Meineke Car Care Centers, Inc. is a \$400 million automobile service provider with 900 franchises throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala, Venezuela, and the Caribbean.

Problem: Meineke relies on direct mailings to market its services to consumers. Meineke franchisee employees collect address information from customers when they come into the shops for purchases. An employee keys the information into a database from which mailing addresses are drawn. However, if an employee mishears or miskeys the information, the incorrectly addressed mail pieces are returned. This was happening to 15% to 20% of the mail pieces that Meineke sent out.

Solution: Meineke upgraded its POS system, a project that included adding a direct Internet connection. The company wanted to add software modules that would use the connection, so Meineke included an address lookup service from TARGUSInfo, which links telephone numbers with consumer information. The address lookup solution improves the accuracy of Meineke's address database, reducing administrative costs and lost sales related to returned mail.

For More Info. On TARGUSInfo

Go To www.targusinfo.com