

Looking good. Even when catastrophe strikes.



Summit Direct Mail processes nearly 1,000,000 pieces of mail each day. When the Pitney Bowes Presort Services facility that presorts their mail experienced a devastating fire, it could have been a client disaster—but thanks to a detailed business continuity plan, Summit Direct experienced no interruption in services.

Summary

Summit Direct Mail is a high-volume mail production company, handling both Standard Mail® and First-Class Mail® for some of the largest national insurance, non profit, financial services, retail, publishing and direct marketing companies. Summit Direct Mail processes nearly 1,000,000 pieces of mail each day, and is known for their flexibility and commitment to turnaround times. Currently, Summit Direct Mail is a five-day-a-week, two-shift operation, and can increase production to 24/7 in order to produce and personalize up to 2,000,000 pieces per day.

When a fire destroyed the Pitney Bowes mail presort facility in Dallas, Summit Direct Mail's reputation was on the line. Any disruption in service would be a catastrophe for their high-volume mail customers.

Instead of weeks or days, Pitney Bowes was back online in a matter of hours—and Summit Direct Mail's clients enjoyed uninterrupted service. "By reacting the way they did, Pitney Bowes made us look stronger to our customers. Their prompt action demonstrated that we chose an excellent partner to commingle our client's mail," notes John Barber, Summit Direct's President.

Pitney Bowes overcame this disaster thanks to the immediate implementation of a well-documented and rehearsed Business Continuity Plan. After first ensuring employee safety, Pitney Bowes moved mail to a pre-determined alternate facility. The USPS was notified, customers were contacted and Pitney Bowes trucks made scheduled pick-ups that day. At the same time, the search for long-term facilities began; and Pitney Bowes Presort Services kept Summit Direct Mail informed every step of the way, never losing touch, always looking forward.



Summit Direct Mail

Challenges

Summit Direct Mail is a high-volume direct mail production company. Their success depends on their ability to deliver reliable service, value-added savings and expert handling of both Standard Mail® and First-Class Mail®.

Solution

Summit Direct Mail chose Pitney Bowes Presort Services to sort, bundle and deliver mailings to the Post Office — and didn't miss a single day of productivity when the Pitney Bowes facility was destroyed in a fire.

Maintaining service excellence during a catastrophe

Pitney Bowes demonstrated a commitment to best practices in Business Continuity Planning. Years before disaster struck the Dallas facility, the company developed a formal plan—one that had been updated and tested just months before the fire. Detailed work flows, task lists, network configurations, technology specs and communications plans for both employees and customers were in place, including the most recent employee and customer contact lists, information that streamlined communication efforts.

Still, the catastrophic fire tested the relationship between Summit Direct Mail and Pitney Bowes, and could have placed Summit Direct Mail on thin ice with its customers. While John Barber was relieved that no Pitney Bowes employees were in danger, he quickly turned his attention to his own business. "I was concerned about our customers, and any interruption of service," Barber recalls. "Because we drive total bottom-line revenue for our customers, whether it is fundraising or customer acquisition, I knew I was about to get hit with a flurry of calls. Ultimately, my customer is going to hold us accountable, Summit Direct Mail. They're going to hold me responsible. They don't care about Pitney Bowes. They want their mail out when they want it out."

Executing and immediate response

Within hours of the fire, local executives took immediate action, following protocols outlined in the Business Continuity Plan. On-site management met with local public safety officials. Corporate executives took on responsibilities as outlined in the plan. Pitney Bowes established a "war room" at a nearby hotel with communications links between those on-site and corporate headquarters. All customers were contacted and given direct line access to their service rep, a key component to providing accurate information and forging ongoing, trusted relationships.

Pitney Bowes' forthright communications reassured John Barber. "Even though they're dealing with this catastrophe behind the scenes, they're meeting their timelines," Barber explains. "And that's important to me."

Up and moving within 24 hours

By the morning after the fire, a fleet of trucks was inspected and approved for operations. A Pitney Bowes facility one mile away was

transformed from a Standard Mail operation to a First-Class Mail operation. Within 24 hours, teams began to identify temporary space. New equipment, servers and technology were being ordered and en route. Preliminary assessments were underway to determine what was lost in the fire, to help gauge the insurance impact for Pitney Bowes and its customers.

John Barber was impressed by such flawless implementation. "By reacting and implementing their business continuity plan immediately, they kept our clients happy," Barber notes. "We didn't lose any customers."

Open lines of communication provide much-needed reassurance

Immediate and ongoing lines of communication were established between Pitney Bowes and Summit Direct Mail; in fact, Summit Direct Mail received situation updates daily. "The trucks ran as scheduled, and they brought in equipment from other parts of the country. They shipped some of our Standard Mail up to Omaha," Barber continues. "Worst case was we saw maybe a one or two-day lag in actual delivery. Considering the magnitude of what they went through, that's very insignificant."

Building an even stronger future

Pitney Bowes recovery efforts did not cease in the weeks after the fire. In fact, communications updates with their customers are ongoing, as Pitney Bowes helps customers sort through the after-effects, including assisting clients on insurance claims processing. Construction is now complete on the new, state-of-the-art permanent facility. Throughout the fire and the aftershock, Pitney Bowes experienced 98 percent customer retention, a testament to the value of Business Continuity Planning, and also to the strong support of customers, such as Summit Direct Mail.

"Whenever things go sideways, how you recover and how you deal with it is what you need to evaluate" summarizes Barber. "Pitney Bowes is very important to the overall success of what we do, because not only have they gotten us through this catastrophe as far as their facility burning down, they've continued to service us as far as calling on customers, coming down and sitting face-to-face with them."

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