



# Fineline Perspectives

## Key Takeaways from the 2010 National Postal Forum

*by Jill Wangler, Fineline Printing Group's Director of Marketing*

Last month I attended my first National Postal Forum, the mailing industry's largest educational event and trade show. As a 20-year veteran in the marketing field, I have always relied on direct mail—among other communications channels—to meet campaign targets. However, I relied on my printer and mailing partner to advise me on the Postal Service's numerous regulations and fee structures.

Now that I work for the supplier side (I joined Fineline in January), I must thoroughly understand those key issues so I can in turn help **my customers** understand the myriad of changes planned and expected from the Postal Service. So, the Forum was a great learning experience for me. Here are a few high level takeaways I learned:

- The USPS hired some of the biggest guns in the consulting world to help it devise its short and long term strategies. While **direct mail will continue to hold its value as a direct marketing channel—and actually grow**—overall volume and revenues from mail in general will go down in the next decade.
- In efforts to meet the marketplace demands for “speed and flexibility,” USPS will adjust delivery frequency to better reflect current mail volumes and customer habits. This will most likely translate into a five day delivery service (eliminating Saturday delivery).
- As well, the USPS needs to expand access to postal products and services. This means that you will see more USPS products in retail settings, a “24/7” availability via kiosks, and likely closings of brick and mortar post offices “where it makes sense.”
- The USPS will continue to aggressively cut costs through innovation, automation, and quality initiatives. Programs such as flat sequencing, Move Updates, and the IMB (Intelligent Mail Barcode) mandate are examples.
- The Post Office is also focused on expanding products and services that are consistent with its mission. Hallmark introduced a new postage-paid greeting card product line at the Forum where Hallmark automatically pays the postage when you send it—eliminating the need for the stamp.
- And pricing....what we all want to know about. Yes prices will need to be adjusted. Whether it is next year or in 2012, it's anyone's guess at this point. The enormous amount of regulatory tape keeps the waters murky at this stage in the game.

I learned much more and look forward to sharing additional insights with you in future Fineline communications.