

# Delivering the goods

## Address verification keeps customers happy

**N**o matter how well a retailer handles every other part of the fulfillment process, if the address on the package is wrong it's not likely to reach the customer. Packages not delivered because of an invalid address create unhappy customers, and, depending on the package courier, can cost a retailer added fees for returning the package to its warehouse. Even if the carrier is able to correct the address so the package can be delivered, the retailer pays extra for that service.

With e-retailers expanding their reach globally they are learning that address formats vary by country. Incorrectly formatted addresses can confuse local carriers, which can delay or prevent delivery. Further, retailers cannot always count on the local postal service, especially in emerging markets, to fill in enough holes in address data to ensure delivery. Add it all up and retailers are discovering that the need for address verification is greater than ever.

"Confirming the deliverability of an address before the order is shipped is critical because any time a retailer sends a package without address confirmation they are taking a huge risk that it will arrive," says Bud Walker, director of Data Quality Solutions for Melissa Data Corp., a provider of data quality and address management technology.

Avoiding delivery problems that can result from an incorrect address starts with validating the shipping address at checkout. It's not uncommon for online shoppers to transpose the numbers in a street address or leave off an apartment or suite number when placing an order.

Melissa Data's address verification system, which uses data from international postal services as well as marketing companies and other sources, validates a shipping address at checkout by cross-referencing it against its address database. If the address entered by the customer does not turn up a match, the retailer is immediately notified and can ask the customer to check the address or provide missing information such as an apartment number.

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Retailers can also use the system to build in address auto-fill capability at checkout. For example, a shopper entering the street number of her building and the first letter of the street name, such as 123 H, can be shown all addresses in the system with a corresponding street number and name beginning with H, as well as city, state and ZIP code through a drop-down menu. Clicking on the correct address auto fills the information into the appropriate data fields, minimizing data-entry errors.

"For the consumer it is a time-saving feature, but for the retailer it means no typographical errors that can negatively affect deliverability of the order," says Walker.

In addition to address verification, Melissa Data provides geocoding tools to help retailers improve delivery rates for international orders by assigning a latitude and longitude to international addresses. Geocoded addresses tell a retailer whether the order is being shipped to a rural area where a delivery agent may be needed to complete the final leg of delivery.

"Some emerging markets don't even have postal codes," says Walker. "Geocoding can also be used to help package carriers optimize delivery routes by grouping deliveries in an area and showing the distance between destination points."

While access to better data can help retailers verify, flesh out and locate addresses and reduce costly returns and address corrections after a package ships, keeping that data fresh is essential.

"There are hundreds of thousands of addresses changes and corrections that occur in the United State alone each week," says Walker. "Fresh address data improves delivery rates and ultimately, customer satisfaction." ●



# Globalize Your Business



Melissa Data can help you globalize your applications as you expand operations to other countries or reach new customers in emerging markets. As a world leading data quality vendor, we offer solutions to verify, correct and standardize addresses in over 240 countries. Eliminate returns, cut postage expenses, prevent fraud and keep your customers happy by verifying their address before you send a package.

- Reduce address correction fees – save up to \$10 per package
- Efficiently validate and correct addresses every time you ship
- Maintain high customer satisfaction

***Accurate data. Delivered.***

- ✓ **Address Verification**
- ✓ **ID Verification**
- ✓ **Email Verification**
- ✓ **GeoCoding**
- ✓ **IP Location**
- ✓ **Name Parsing**
- ✓ **Phone Verification**
- ✓ **Record Matching**

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