

DATABASE BY DESIGN, INC.

Increase Communication and Sales Through an Intelligent Mail Merge System

Going beyond mass letter creation

Do you have enough time to effectively communicate with each of your customers? Are you spending advertising dollars to reach existing clients without impressive results? Contact your existing and potential customers using a personal touch through an 'Intelligent' mail merge system.

What will an intelligent mail merge system do for me?

- ✓ Allow you to send communications that show you understand each customer's needs
- ✓ Quickly create personalized client communication with very little effort
- ✓ Send targeted communications to increase existing customer sales

Take a look: Imagine that you own a retail book store that sends out a monthly letter to its customers informing them of new and upcoming books. Each letter addresses the customer individually. The letter indicates how many new books have arrived since the person's last purchase date. It lists how many books have arrived that fit the style of the person's preferences based on either a survey, or on their established purchasing habits. Also, the tone of the letter is modified to fit the genre of the style of books listed. The letter is sent out via fax, mail, or e-mail per the customer's preference.

Dear Sue, We are pleased to inform you that since your last purchase in November, we have received over 50 new book titles regarding the Art of Gardening. This includes 5 new publications on fruit trees, 7 titles regarding composting and fertilizing methods, and 4 books about herb gardening.

We would like to support your interest in gardening. Please come see our Gardening Book Specialist, Jane Tree, prior to March 15th, and receive 10% off your next purchase. Jane would be happy to answer any questions that you have, and can be reached by phone at (503) 555-4567. Come by soon to see what you can 'dig' up!

What makes an intelligent mail merge system?

Current mail merge capabilities can involve several steps, or even require a little programming in order to generate a document. In contrast, intelligent mail merging offers a solution that contains everything that you need. A truly elegant system requires the following:

- Access to your [contact](#) information
- Access to information [related](#) to those contacts
- Intelligence-building capabilities to [blend](#) related data into the letter
- Intuitive user interface that enables [effortless](#) template creation

Such a system would enable you to create a letter template like a normal word processor, but it would also give you the ability to add 'intelligence' to the template. Adding this intelligence would be as simple as dragging-and-dropping options, or choosing options from a menu item.

What can you do with an Intelligent Mail Merge System?

- **Basic** - Enables you to insert contact information (such as name, address, and phone) into the proper places.
- **Personalization** - Enables you to insert related and composite information (such as monthly sales or test results) into the body of the letter. An example of this would be "Your account balance is \$150.00." or "We received your results on Monday, January 14."
- **Graphing** - Adds graphic information into the letter by summarizing the information into a graph and including it in the body of the letter.
- **Intelligence** - This means that you can have the program add or combine sentences based on information about the recipient. You could also modify how a paragraph reads based on related data. For instance, you could have the tone of a collections letter modified to suit a customer's past payment history.
- **Customized "form" letters** - Intelligent mail merging can also help when you need to generate a letter one at a time. There may be times when you need to send out letters that have a common format, but contain paragraphs that differ depending on the type of customer or the information requested. In this case, the template letter could be displayed and the optional paragraphs would be represented in a listing where the user could easily drag-and-drop the paragraphs into the letter. This type of program would also enable the user to create the letter as they are talking on the phone with the recipient with a minimal amount of typing. The letter can then be sent out immediately with other requested information.
- **Technology Integration** - Another important feature of intelligent mail merging is the ability to integrate it with other current technologies. Instead of just printing the letters and sending them out via postal mail, the program can access the preferences of the recipient and transmit the letter accordingly. The merged letter can be sent via e-mail, postal mail, or fax. E-mail based communication can provide additional benefits. The e-mail merged letter can contain color and graphics to add depth. Also, HTML links can be added to help drive traffic to the web site, or the links can be used as references to help add support to the contents of the letter.

How to obtain an intelligent mail merge system

Some word processors have advanced functionality that helps set up intelligent mail merge templates. Many organizations, seeking simplicity, work with their current software programmer to create a mail merge solution that will be compatible with their existing information management system.

If you do not have a software programmer to support your organization, we would be happy to be a resource for you. At Database by Design, Inc., we can help you optimize your communications. Contact us so we can help you build an intelligent mail merge system!

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Next Month's Topic: Simplify your web site management - Use a database to update and manage your web site