

# Case Study: The Washington Post Streamlines Billing for Readers and Advertisers With Help from Taylor Communications



## Situation

The Washington Post is a world-class news and information company that delivers content through multiple platforms to one of the best readership bases in the country. The Post previously outsourced their advertiser and subscriber billing services to three separate vendors which made the entire process cumbersome and costly.

David Olson, Director of Transactional Accounting for The Washington Post, was tasked with finding a solution that would help reduce billing costs. The media company wanted to consolidate vendors by discovering a single provider who could support every aspect of their billing services, including the transition to electronic presentment and payment. The Post selected Taylor Communications to handle both advertiser and subscriber billing after receiving recommendations from other large publishing companies.

## Solution

By choosing an experienced vendor to handle both advertiser and subscriber billing, The Washington Post reduced expenses substantially and increased operational efficiency by converting to one platform. "The implementation team at Taylor Communications did a phenomenal job when transitioning the print from our previous vendors," said Cynthia Fisher, Director of Finance PMO for The Washington Post. "It was the smoothest migration I have ever been a part of."

Taylor Communications laid out a phased approach for The Post to make improvements at a pace that was comfortable for the organization. The first phase entailed an improved process for printing subscriber and advertiser statements. Taylor Communications

**Client:**  
The Washington Post

**Market:**  
Publishing

**Solution:**  
Advertiser billing, subscriber billing and renewal notices

**Services:**  
Billing process analysis, document redesign, statement printing, mailing services, electronic presentment, message editing

**Benefits:**

- Improved customer satisfaction
- Quick, efficient transition from previous vendors
- Printing and postage savings
- Improved document management
- Streamlined data processing

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redesigned The Post's bills, suggesting multiple ways to improve the overall look and readability of the documents. The new design created additional space for messaging which can be used to inform, cross-sell or up-sell specific segments of advertisers by creating rules-based communications.

In the course of redesigning the bills, Taylor Communications looked for ways to reduce postage costs. All bills had been sent out in 6" x 9" envelopes to account for customers who received multiple pages. Taylor Communications recommended sending mail pieces with fewer than six pages in a #10 envelope, which resulted in substantial savings.

Previously, The Post was mailing all renewal reminders at first class rates. Taylor Communications analysis showed that switching to standard mail only resulted in a day or two delay compared to first class. If the paper needs to get reminders out quickly, they have the option to upgrade to first class mail for a small fee. With the help of Taylor Communications, the media company was able to save \$300,000 a year in postage by sending 80 percent of their renewal reminders by standard mail.

To help further reduce postage costs, Taylor Communications helped The Washington Post incorporate electronic Address Change Services (ACS), which reduced return mail and automated the address correction process. Instead of receiving printed notification of undeliverable mail, the media company receives electronic notification with a unique identifier, making it easy to update address information in its systems. "Taylor Communications brought new insights that we weren't thinking about," Fisher stated. "We believe they will be a partner that works with us and understands our business."

In Phase II of the implementation, Taylor Communications will produce electronic versions of statements and tear sheets, allowing the media company to easily store, manage and send both documents on-demand. When an advertiser calls in with a question about their

bill, the customer service department is able to quickly pull up an identical version of the customer's bill, allowing for quick and easy dispute resolution.

## Benefits

By analyzing the media company's billing process, Taylor Communications helped significantly reduce unnecessary expenses and streamline processes, resulting in benefits for both their customers and internal staff:

- More attractive, customer-friendly advertising bills
- Significantly reduced postage expenses
- Simplified address change process
- Reduced amount of return mail

The Washington Post also benefits by printing and mailing their statements with a supplier that handles millions of statements and invoices annually for customers across the U.S. Taylor Communications economies of scale meant lower print costs, access to the latest digital print equipment and redundant facilities in case of emergencies, capabilities that few general printers can match.

Taylor Communications experience serving leading publishers across the country enables it to provide industry expertise and insights, along with consistent quality and document integrity. "They understand our business," Fisher said. "They came in with knowledge of the publishing industry and listened to our particular goals. In short, they've delivered everything they promised."