



PRODUCTION SOLUTIONS



# LISTENING WITH PURPOSE: A YEAR OF INSIGHTS

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JANUARY 2024

# WHY A LISTENING TOUR?



# THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT

Direct mail is both growing in cost AND continues to be a fundraising powerhouse, so it is paramount that nonprofits continue to invest in this critical communication channel. Controlling costs while sustaining an impactful mail program is the proverbial needle we must thread. Collaboration is key as we leave no stone unturned for cost savings and program transformation.

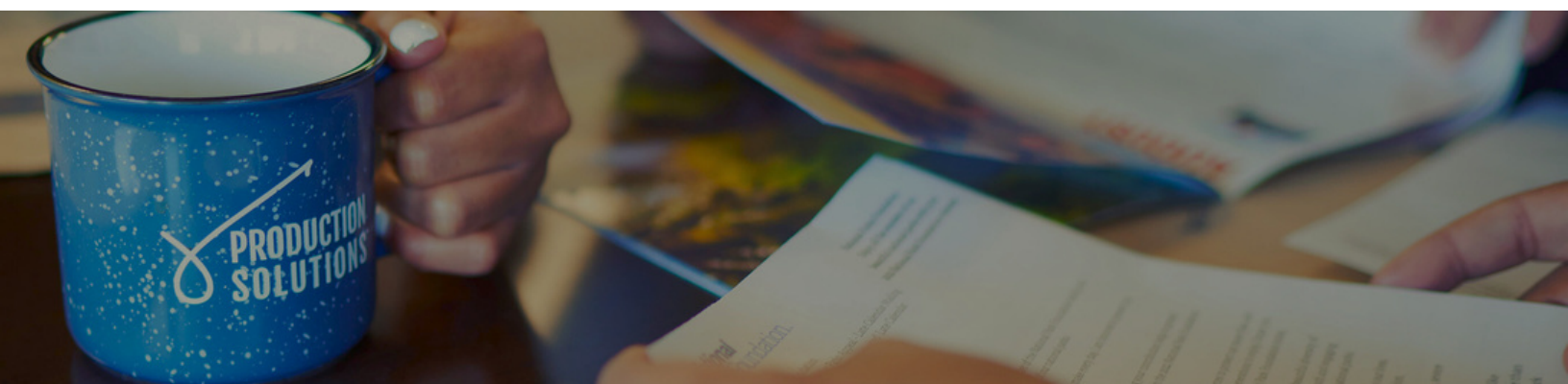
Out of this pressurized environment, Production Solutions initiated a listening tour with our clients and agency partners for feedback, insights, and collaboration.

# METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND

Over the course of 2023, our President, Ben Harris, and Vice President of Sales & Client Experience, Leigh Janis, engaged in a series of conversations with more than 25 organizations with a goal to:

- » **Understand Their Changing Needs:** In a world where needs, demands, and priorities are ever shifting, we sought to truly grasp the needs of our valued customers. Their organizations are at the forefront of purpose-driven initiatives, and it was imperative for us to better understand the challenges and aspirations that shape them.
- » **Enhance Our Service Model:** We have always been committed to delivering the highest quality service, but we recognize that perfection is a journey, not a destination. By engaging as partners, we aimed to identify specific areas where our service model could be refined to better align with their evolving expectations.
- » **Innovate for Impact:** Collaboration and innovation have always been at the heart of what we do. We recognized that in these conversations lay the seeds of inspiration. Our discussions were not just about listening; they were about ideation. How could the Production Solutions team better serve our clients' needs? How could we bring new ideas to the table?

The insights gathered during this listening tour form the cornerstone of our shared vision for the future. This report is a testament to our commitment to transparency and our unwavering dedication to our clients' success. As we delve into the findings, we can't emphasize strongly enough how much we appreciate the trust, candor, and collaboration we experienced throughout this process. The feedback gleaned has ignited a spark of transformation within Production Solutions. Together, we are poised to make more possible and continue to inspire people to give.



# COMPETING PRIORITIES ARE THE NORM

Quickly, we noticed a trend amongst the feedback. Our conversations increasingly revealed a wide range of needs, goals, and priorities including monthly donors, sustainability, data security, brand transformation and more. One of our objectives was to gain a deeper understanding of the complex challenges and ambitions that drive our clients' mission-driven work. **What was affirmed is that our clients and partners are juggling complexity like no other time.**

**MONTHLY DONORS** SUSTAINER CONVERSION  
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION  
SUSTAINABILITY **GROW, GROW, GROW**  
NEW MARKETS SUSTAINER GROWTH COMMUNITY-CENTRIC  
MID-LEVEL EXPANSION BRAND TRANSFORMATION  
**MULTI-CHANNEL** STRENGTH-BASED MESSAGING  
PROCESS SIMPLIFICATION **DATA SECURITY**  
CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS NEW CHANNELS **DONOR INSIGHTS**





# 5 WAYS WE WILL MEET OUR CLIENTS' NEEDS

As we engaged with our clients, recurring themes emerged regarding both their immediate and future needs. Within the diverse tapestry of their requirements, goals, and aspirations, several key themes became evident, and Production Solutions can make an impact.

1

## BRING NEW IDEAS & TECHNOLOGY TO THE TABLE

Our clients are eager to embrace the latest print and mail innovations. They seek guidance on harnessing new capabilities, from digital print to trigger mailings and innovative formats. The goal is to simplify the mail process, enhance efficiency, and address cost and scheduling challenges. Notably, clients are calling on PS to be bold in suggesting strategies beyond conventional approaches, recognizing our expertise as production experts.

## 2

## CONTAIN COSTS & ACCURATELY FORECAST

Amidst a landscape characterized by rising costs and supply chain limitations, clients have expressed apprehension regarding budget management. There is a pressing need for Production Solutions (PS) to assist clients in articulating the enduring value of direct mail to their board members and stakeholders, thereby justifying the return on investment. Furthermore, the question of the ongoing financial viability of direct mail demands careful consideration. Clients emphasized the critical importance of accurate budget predictions, cautioning against overly conservative estimates that contribute to overbudgeting. While acknowledging external factors, they are actively seeking opportunities for enhanced cost efficiency.

## 3

## MAKE IT EASY & CONSISTENT

Simplification emerged as a notable theme during our tour. While clients expressed satisfaction with the exceptional service experience provided by PS, our focus lies on identifying areas for enhancement in technology and legacy processes. The imperative for PS is to elevate and streamline the partnership experience. Enhanced communication prioritizes quality over quantity, advocating for fewer emails and meetings to foster more impactful collaboration. Continuous evaluation of our processes and systems remains crucial to optimize and simplify the service experience for our clients.



## 4

## INTEGRATE FOR AN OMNICHANNEL APPROACH

As the shift towards omnichannel approaches becomes a necessity rather than a possibility, clients are looking for guidance on streamlining internal processes and breaking down departmental silos. The quest for new channels and donor engagement strategies aligns with a growing realization that data plays a pivotal role. Clients anticipate that data expertise will facilitate this transition and look to PS for assistance in navigating this intricate landscape. Additionally, clients aspire to integrate services across various partners, including Moore divisions, and seek streamlined collaboration solutions.

## 5

## SHORTEN TIME TO MARKET

Throughout the listening tour, clients expressed concerns about extended production schedules. Encouragingly, most of our production schedules are returning to pre-pandemic levels as we transition into 2024. The importance of cadence cannot be overstated. Each client's meticulously planned and timed programs rely on a precise orchestration of events. Therefore, we are intensifying our focus on prioritizing timing, planning, and agility as indispensable elements to uphold the integrity of the mail program overall. Additionally, ensuring up-to-date data is paramount to positioning our clients for sustained long-term growth.

Just as clients aspire to simplify internal operations, they also advocate for a more nimble and efficient production process. It's imperative that the entire life cycle of a mailing is shortened and there are many ways PS can impact that lifecycle – from data to production to delivery.





## NO STONE UNTURNS

It's clear that our clients will continue to confront various challenges throughout 2024, including USPS instability and price hikes, navigating an Election Year, ongoing global conflicts, economic nexus/sales tax complexities, fluctuations in the paper market, and the need for long-term investments in DEI, data security, and sustainability.

To meet the shifting needs and priorities of our clients, PS is dedicated to an iterative and agile strategic planning approach. We follow a playbook where our core values and vision remain steadfast, while we regularly adjust our strategic goals to address market dynamics and threats. Coming into 2024, our current tactical priorities include investments in talent, processes, and technology to help us better serve our clients.

**COST-CONTAINMENT WILL REMAIN A TOP PRIORITY. TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED, CLOSELY MONITORING FACTORS LIKE SUPPLY CHAIN TRENDS, COMMODITY PRICES, AND POSTAL BUDGETS.**

One approach we developed to address these challenges is an internal pricing index exercise to keep an eye on market fluctuations. Encouragingly, we expect production costs to remain stable as we move into the new year. Regarding postal budgets, nonprofits should anticipate two rate increases per year in January and July. To combat these increases, Production Solutions offers comprehensive strategies, including postal audits, USPS promotions, mailpiece optimization, and address quality enhancements.

We deeply understand that every penny counts for our clients' critical missions, and we are committed to addressing these challenges with clarity and vision.

# ALL DELIVERED WITH TRUST AND INTEGRITY

Production Solutions has long strived to hire the best of the best when it comes to production management services, and we believe in a people-first environment. We strive to treat our clients' missions as our own and to treat the organizations and the people that we work with as valued partners. The words used most often to describe PS were **integrity, trustworthy, solutions-oriented and partner.**

For many of the participants, the PS production team is a trusted team member or an extension of their teams. Customer service and client centricity will remain the north star for how PS will operate in order to steward the trust we have earned from our clients.

Trust forms the cornerstone of our partnership, enabling us to help guide our clients toward transformation to meet their future goals. Together, we embrace the path forward, seeking continuous improvement and incremental gains that collectively make a significant impact. We leave no stone unturned and will double down on the fundamentals while also prioritizing the long-term vision. Our focus remains steadfast on guiding our clients towards their next best steps, where each penny invested contributes to their mission's success.

## THANKS!

In closing, we extend our sincere gratitude to our valued clients. Their participation, time, and candid insights have been instrumental in shaping our collective journey towards solutions and success. Together, we remain steadfast in our commitment to their critical missions, and we look forward to another year of collaboration and achievement.

