

Your Postal Podcast 36th Edition Transcript

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Richard Watkins: Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins of the Postal Service's Western Area Corporate Communications Center. In this edition, you'll learn about a new Postal Service product that's helping small businesses reach customers quickly, easily, and cost-effectively. And you'll hear from the president of a local branch of the National Association of Letter Carriers about this year's 19th annual NALC Food Drive.

Promoting a small business isn't always easy or affordable, but a new product from the Postal Service promises to be both. With no mailing lists or permits required, *Every Door Direct Mail* is just the ticket for small businesses looking to grow their business and connect with customers. Brian Sperry has the details.

EDDM Segment

Brian Sperry: For small business owners, marketing can be a daunting if necessary task. Every potential medium, whether TV, radio, print, direct mail or online, comes with advantages and disadvantages.

Direct mail, for example, is inexpensive and effective. But the time and cost required for permits, fees and maintaining mailing lists could stress the budget of any small business.

Not any more.

A new product, Every Door Direct Mail, or EDDM, gives small businesses an easier way to extend their customer reach.

Val Laehn is a Business Solutions Specialist with the Postal Service.

Val Laehn: Every Door Direct Mail or EDDM is a service that allows businesses to send mailings to their desired audience. They can do so without the need to acquire a list or put specific names or addresses on the mail piece. What it can do is it can reach out to every address within a designed geographic area, like if they want to go to their neighborhood, their business area, wherever they're seeking new customers. And they can do so in a really cost-effective way.

Sperry: So what types of businesses can best benefit from EDDM?

Laehn: A hardware store, liquor store, barber shop, beauty shop, tailor shop, anything like that. But it could be for auto dealers, restaurants, furniture stores, any type of business actually can benefit from this.

Sperry: The Belle Mar Center is a shopping mall that was built on the eastern edge of Mankato, MN, in the 1960s. Sustained growth has since pushed that boundary a couple of miles further east, and today Belle Mar Center hosts a mix of small retailers and service businesses.

Mankato letter carrier Kimberly Roy serves the Belle Mar Center and the surrounding neighborhood.

Roy, who has turned in more than a dozen Customer Connect leads for businesses on her route, pitched the idea of producing an EDDM piece to all of the mall's tenants. The mall's management company was invited to a meeting to discuss the proposal, and came away so impressed with the potential that they not only picked up the cost of postage, but all expenses in producing and printing the piece as well.

With a theme of "We're Just a Walk Away," the first of three planned mail pieces was sent to 7,500 customers in the surrounding neighborhood. Business owners noted an almost immediate response from new and existing customers.

As for Kim Roy, she's going to continue explaining to the business owners on her route how Every Door Direct Mail can help them better connect with customers.

Kimberly Roy: These are customers that just want to grow their business, but they just need a little bit of help.

NALC Food Drive

Watkins: On Saturday, May 14th, the 19th annual NALC National Food Drive to stamp out hunger took place. Last year, city and rural carriers collected a record 77.1 million pounds of food donations along their delivery routes, which brought the total to more than 1 billion pounds for the food drive, which began in 1992. On the day of this year's food drive, I talked with Carl Rader, president of NALC Branch 5521, at the Blue Valley Branch of the Shawnee Mission, KS, Post Office. He talked about the willingness of customers in Johnson County, KS, to donate food despite the bad economy.

Carl Rader, President, NALC Branch, 5521: The economy is tough; it's been tough for several years, but I think Johnson County patrons know that. And I think they really come through because they realize times are tough. And what is really incredible is some of the people that gave food last year and year before last, this year, need that food.

Watkins: And as with any large-scale operation, the letter carriers have learned how to keep their food drive efforts organized.

Rader: This afternoon as the carriers come back they'll park just short of the dock here; and we'll unload the back of the truck onto the ground. And we get down with these white tubs and we separate the food into cans, one group, soft-sided stuff and glass stuff is one group, and just boxed things will be a third sort. It's better sorted for Harvesters when it gets over there that way.

Watkins: Rader also praised the efforts of his rural carrier coworkers as well as other postal employee who helped with the food drive.

Rader: I think we're a little over half rural carriers here at Blue Valley. And this year, it may be that the rural carriers will pick up as much or more than the city carriers. It hasn't always been that way. But this year, the rural carriers really contributed a lot. They're coming back with truckloads, and I believe Blue Valley will easily set a record this year.

And everybody really helps out; we've had clerks out here helping us to sort the food -- they don't get to pick up -- but they come out and help sort the food, and join us out here. Some of them, after they're off-the-clock, stand out here and just visit. And those of us that are here working all day off-the-clock, it's nice to have the company here to visit with, and it makes for a good time.

Watkins: And now, a roundup of recent postal headlines:

The Postal Service announced that, absent substantial legislative change, USPS will be forced to default on payments to the federal government, after it ended the second quarter of this fiscal year in March with a net loss of \$2.2 billion. That loss compared to a net loss of \$1.6 billion for the same period last year, despite significant cost reductions and revenue growth initiatives. Current financial projections have the Postal Service reaching its federal borrowing limit by the end of the fiscal year in September.

The loss was blamed primarily on sluggish economic growth and continued diversion of First-Class Mail to electronic alternatives, even though the Postal Service has reduced its employee complement by more than 130,000 positions in the past three years, and cut the number of employees by more than 6,700 just in the past three months.

Postmaster General and CEO Patrick Donahoe said the Postal Service continues to seek changes in the law to enable it to operate using a more flexible and sustainable business model. Mr. Donahoe reiterated his commitment to work with Congress and the Obama administration to resolve these issues prior to the end of the fiscal year. The PMG also announced that service performance remained excellent during the second quarter, with the national score for overnight Single-Piece First-Class Mail arriving on-time 96 percent of the time, a slight improvement over the same period in 2010.

In other news, the Postal Service unveiled its fourth new semi-postal stamp in early May -- one that will likely cause fits of animal attraction when it goes on sale in September.

The "Save Vanishing Species" semi-postal stamp will raise money for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Wildlife Without Borders Multinational Species Conservation Funds." Each stamp will cost 55 cents -- 11 cents more than a regular First-Class postage stamp -- with proceeds going to support conservation efforts to protect endangered species around the world -- including elephants, rhinos, marine turtles, and tigers like the cub pictured on the stamp. A sheet of 20 stamps will cost 11 dollars.

Customers interested in the stamps can pre-purchase them now at usps.com/shop.

Watkins: Thank you for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now we'd like to hear from you. Please send your feedback and story ideas to YourPostalPodcast@usps.com. A production of USPS Western Area Corporate Communications. Copyright 2011, All Rights Reserved.