

POSTAL NEWS

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1. TNT To Take Slice Of Charity Mail Market

18 March 2009 by Sarah Sharpe - © Hellmail.co.uk

Dutch-owned TNT Post has announced it will be handling mail on behalf of some of the UK's biggest and most highly respected charities - through a new contract with DM print management specialist Brightsource.

Brightsource is currently responsible for managing the production and delivery of one in seven of all UK fundraising mailings, with well-known organisations such as UNICEF, British Heart Foundation, and the RSPCA amongst its clients. As a new partner of Brightsource's FASTRACK service¹, TNT Post will collect and sort hundreds of thousands of charity direct mailings, before handing them to Royal Mail for final mile delivery. Brightsource will utilise TNT Post's Premier service – a two day guaranteed solution for pre-sorted mail.

Brightsource was attracted to TNT Post as its upstream mail carrier, not only for its cost effective mail services, but also by the company's environmental ethos, to which both organisations are firmly committed.

Peter Frings, managing director, Brightsource comments:

“We are really pleased to have selected TNT Post as our latest mail partner. Not only does TNT Post offer a reputable, cost effective service that we can rely on, but its commitment to the environment perfectly complements our own CSR programme. Like TNT Post, Brightsource is looking to build on the success of its own carbon footprinting service by enabling some of the UK's largest fundraising marketers to accurately preview and control carbon emissions on a campaign-by-campaign basis. We look forward to working together with TNT Post to offer our customers a truly environmentally responsible service, whilst providing fantastic value for money.”

Nick Wells, chief executive of TNT Post adds:

“We are delighted that we will soon be carrying mail on behalf of some of the UK's most highly regarded charities and third sector organisations. By becoming Brightsource's latest mail partner, TNT Post will provide it with significant cost

savings and efficiencies, which Brightsource in turn will be able to pass onto their impressive roster of third sector clients.

Our work with Brightsource is the latest evidence of TNT Post's competitive mail solutions, services and products that continue to reinforce its main position as the main challenger to Royal Mail"

Source: TNT Post

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2. Norway Post Defends Competition Law Claim

18 March 2009 by Franz Groter - © Hellmail.co.uk

The German logistics company Schenker has made a claim for compensation against Norway Post.

The claim is based on concerns by Schenker that Norway Post were possibly in breach of competition laws after it introduced Post-in-Shops in the early 2000's in which Norway Post demanded exclusive rights for the delivery of packages in Norgesgruppen, Shell and certain Hakon and Coop shops. Norway Post

Norway Post said it would provide the ESA with its response before this date but refutes compensation claims by Schenker. Norway Post's CEO Dag Mejdell said:

"We disagree with the ESA's conclusions and as such there are no grounds for Schenker to demand compensation. We are sure that the ESA will change its conclusions once we have given Norway Post's side of the matter."

Norway Post said there were a number of reasons why it stipulated certain provisos in its agreements with individual shops, but the two most important reasons were:

- * The establishment, development and introduction of Post in Shops as a new service concept in the Norwegian market carried with it significant business risks and costs.
- * The provisos were necessary to ensure supply with respect to the concession requirements demanded for a national offer.

After what it decribed as a successful introduction of Post in Shops onto the Norwegian market, Norway Post said it removed such provisos to its Post-in-Shops agreements in 2006. At the same time it was developing the Post-in-Shops concept in Norway, it's competitors were building up a comprehensive network for package delivery in Norway.

Norway Post also pointed out that even with more than 15,000 possible delivery sites for packages in Norway, it only ran Post-in-Shops in less than 10% of them and that it's competitors have roughly the same number of delivery sites as Norway Post does.

Source: Norway Post

France braces for nationwide strikes,

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3. Millions stage protests in France

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2009

Over three million French workers have taken to the streets across the country in an attempt to secure jobs and increase pay.

Around one million civil servants were joined by members of the public on Thursday, with more than 200 protest marches held, officials said, in protest against the government's handling of the economic crisis.

Thursday's action, the second in less than two months, is a blunt criticism of the policies of Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president, and the latest sign of social unrest due to the global economic downturn.

A similar day of action at the end of January saw an estimated 2.5 million people involved.

'Empty coffers'

With the cost of living rising, strikers are calling for higher wages, better methods for protecting employment and higher taxes for high earners.

"The crisis is not the fault of the workers," one banner read at the biggest march in Paris, where 85,000 people marched through the city, according to police.

Public transport and schools, hospitals and the postal service have been affected by the strikes, which are supported by around 75 per cent of the population, according to opinion polls.

About one third of schoolteachers took part in the strike on Thursday, along with a quarter of employees at France Telecom and one in five postal workers, officials said. Private sector workers also participated in the protests, including employees of Air France and oil company Total.

In Clairoux, a town in France's north, around 10,000 people protested over the closure of a Continental tyre plant, which has meant a loss of 1,120 jobs.

Estelle Youssouffa, Al Jazeera's correspondent in Paris, said the government has little resources to help the workers.

"President Sarkozy cannot do much really, he has already said he has very little room to manoeuvre, the coffers of the French state are empty," she said.

"Sarkozy has already said that despite the large turnout nothing more can be done.

"But the people are determined, and desperate. They don't believe the economic package will have any benefit to them".

'Sense of injustice'

Agnes Poirier, a French political commentator, told Al Jazeera people are "very disillusioned" with Sarkozy's government.

"Every single corporation in France has a motive, a reason to demonstrate today. The French in their majority are protesting against a string of what they considered as ill-advised and rushed reforms that president Sarkozy wants to implement," she said.

She added that despite the majority of the population supporting the demonstrations, Sarkozy is unlikely to back down.

"The government is very cautious because it knows that there is popular support for these demonstrations, and yet Nicolas Sarkozy said yesterday that he wouldn't back off and he would actually press on with his reforms," she said.

"A very strong sense of injustice is building up," Jean-Claude Mailly, head of the Force Ouvriere Union, told the Reuters news agency.

"I think the government will find it hard to ignore us."

The government has introduced a \$34bn stimulus plan aimed at business investment, and after the January 29 strike Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president, offered more money to help vulnerable households weather the crisis.

Ministers say there will be no more concessions, explaining that the previous measures have not yet taken effect and warning that the heavily-indebted nation cannot afford more handouts.

Underlining the tensions, workers at a tyre factory in northern France recently pelted managers with eggs after they were told it was closing and, last week, staff at a Sony plant locked up their bosses for a night to demand better redundancy cover.

With its large public sector and welfare system, France is better placed than many to ride out the economic storm, but is still being strongly affected, with some analysts predicting the economy will contract by two per cent this year and unemployment jump to almost 10 per cent.

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4. Royal Mail Does Have A Future

20 March 2009 by Sarah Sharpe - © Hellmail.co.uk

The UK Government may have come up against a brick wall on its plans to part-privatise the Royal Mail.

It had been widely rumoured that Dutch-owned TNT was interested in becoming a strategic partner but with banks unwilling to make loans and most postal operators already weathering a marked decline in business, there are now serious concerns that even if part-privatisation were to go ahead, it could see up to 49% of Royal Mail sold for a knock-down price.

Steve Lawson, editor for Hellmail the postal industry news site said:

"I raised concerns about this last year. Trying to sell the idea of a strategic partnership in what was already looking to be a tough time ahead seemed risky enough, but now, with few postal operators and mail carriers reporting anything other than a sharp decline in business, anyone looking to get into what will be a complex partnership to get right, let alone raising the money needed for such a venture, would be really stretching themselves.

"My concern is that Royal Mail could just continue to struggle along unless there is a clear understanding between the CWU and Royal Mail and a willingness for them

both to change and work together, not just on paper but a genuine commitment from everyone to give their very best.

"To date, that hasn't really happened. It is unrealistic for the union to expect the service to fully modernise, which it needs to do, and at the same time preserve all jobs and all distribution hubs. Equally, Royal Mail cannot shut its ears to the concerns of union members. Its this standoff that prevents any meaningful progress. Much of it is rooted in years of being a public service and it cannot move forward unless both sides have the same vision. Its this lack of cohesion that is robbing Royal Mail of any 'get-up-and-go'.

"In theory, with the pension deficit lifted, Royal Mail has the capacity to really pull its socks up and make the business fly but to do that it needs to be a company-wide initiative that puts the 'them and us' scenario behind for good, and everyone involved seeing the bigger picture.

"The pension deficit is only one millstone, the other is the abominable industrial relations within. That just has to go and whilst touched upon in the Hooper report, everyone knows its a major problem. I'm not entirely convinced that the existing culture within Royal Mail can be turned around, but both sides have to be realistic, and accept that jobs will go in order to put the business on a stronger footing against fierce competition but in the process, it can mean a real future for everyone in the business.

"Giving employees real shares, a vested interest in what they do is something Chairman Allan Leighton wanted to do but this was turned down by the government last time. It is vital that everyone works as a tight-knit team and has a reason to make it work. It won't be easy by any means. The mail industry is going through an industrial revolution of its own and that means everyone employed by the company needs to feel valued and that if the company succeeds, everyone succeeds.

"Every single worker is a representative of the business in some capacity and should be selling what they do to the max and at every opportunity. Clearly the experience is there - over 350 years of experience. Those that don't have that determination would soon be rooted out by their colleagues. Royal Mail is a team. Providing everyone can see that, theres a real future for the Royal Mail.

"Without that cultural change, no amount of money and modernisation will ever fully realise the potential that Royal Mail has." he said.

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5. How to curtail junk mail

Thursday, March 19, 2009

Junk mail is changing from an everyday annoyance to a global-warming bad guy. Conservation groups are amping up the pressure to cut down the flow - such as credit card pitches, catalogs and supermarket circulars - in the name of saving landfills, transportation fuel and trees.

More Opinion

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The numbers are staggering. The average household receives over 800 pieces of junk mail per year. It's a mighty river that totals 30 percent of the world's snail mail. The brochures, letters and inserts equal 100 million trees per year, according to ForestEthics, an enviro group that's pushing for stricter federal rules.

Next week San Francisco supervisors will consider a resolution by Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi, who originated the once-ridiculed but now considered visionary plastic-bag ban.

The unsought mail is "archaic, obnoxious and unnecessary," he says. The nonbinding measure asks Sacramento to set up a tough Do Not Mail registry. A hearing is scheduled on March 23.

But what should be done -and who will pass under the yoke of public law - are major questions. Any sweeping change should take stock of a complicated landscape.

Consumers already have several options to cut down on unsolicited mail. Also, nonprofit and religious groups are heavy junk mailers. Does a media-savvy church or university rate the same restraints as a mattress retailer or fashion catalog?

In addition, it will be interesting to see if lawmakers will crack down on the election-season floodtide of political mailers, culled from voter lists without permission.

Not everyone may be that upset about an overstuffed mailbox. Some stay-at-home types enjoy reading glossy displays of housewares, clothes or fruit gift packs. Businesses, after all, send out the avalanche of catalogs because they work, and consumers use them to make purchases, either on the spot or on a later trip to a store.

The U.S. Postal Service opposes a junk mail ban. A core business, after all, would be harmed, and postal jobs might be jeopardized. Though the numbers are huge, junk mail is trending downwards, said Postal Service spokesman James Wigdel. Volume dropped from 104 billion pieces in 2007 to 99 billion in 2008, with this year's expected to be lower.

For many, though, the torrent of unsolicited mail is far too much. Some 40 percent of the junk mail that falls through mail slots is never opened. There are special torments: Mail that keeps coming for a deceased relative or the need to snip credit card come-ons in half to prevent identity thieves from fishing the information from the trash.

Junk mail amounts to a daily annoyance. A law may be difficult to enact and even more difficult to enforce.

The best option today is to check out the Web sites of businesses and environmental groups that offer to help unclutter your mailbox.
Hold that mail!

Want to cut down the flow of unwanted mail? Here are Web sites that can help:

The Direct Marketing Association offers a series of steps that let consumers cancel unwanted mail, remove deceased relatives from lists and bar pitches from credit cards issuers and magazines. The go-to spot: dmachoice.org.

Catalog Choice at catalogchoice.org. targets unwanted catalogs, considered the SUVs of the junk-mail world. It's simple and easy to follow but only deals with catalogs.

GreenDimes.com will scrub your name from industry lists for \$20 - and it watches to make sure new senders don't add you to lists. It even promises to plant 5 trees on your behalf.

The environmental group, 41pounds.org, which takes its name the weight of an average year's unsolicited mail, offers a similar service for a \$41 fee.

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