

POSTAL NEWS

No. 4/2011

**Formulated by UNI-Japan Post in cooperation with UNI-Apro,
ASPEK Indonesia and SPPI**

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1. A Common-Sense Plan to Save the Postal Service Pt. III

January 3, 2011 posted by Eric L. Wattree · 4 Comments

BENEATH THE SPIN • ERIC L. WATTREE

A Common-Sense Plan to Save the Postal Service Pt. III

As pointed out in part II of this series, the forty-year experiment of trying to provide mail service by using the principles of private enterprise has led to the postal service becoming so corrupt and inefficient that it's no longer able to perform its primary mission, delivering the mail. Much like what took place on Wall street, the profit motive attendant to the principles of private enterprise has overwhelmed the agency's mandate to provide a public service. The agency's old mandate has now been replaced by the primary mission of enriching its top executives. That, in turn, has led to a culture of employee abuse, poor customer service, and the looming demise of the agency itself. Thus, in our previous article we advocated the abolishment of the "pay-for-performance" program for the agency's top executives. As we see it, that's an essential part of any hope to save the postal service.

The pay-for-performance program was initially put into place based on the widely held assumption that outrageously higher pay would draw a higher caliber of executives, but there is absolutely no evidence that there is any correlation between greed and competence. In fact, our recent experience with the postal service, and on Wall Street, seems to suggest that just the opposite is true. Thus, a more accurate rule of thumb should be, any person who places more emphasis on wealth than character is not smart enough to be trusted.

If the executives that we entrusted to run the postal service were actually worth the money that they were being paid, surely they should have recognized that the agency's nearly 600,000 employees and the goodwill of its customers are the agency's most valuable asset. Yet, the very first thing these executives did to offset the agency's losses was to undermine them both. Even as these executives enriched themselves with

unprecedented perks and salaries, they began to excess, downgrade, and literally steal from their employees, and did everything they could to make it harder for their customers to mail a letter – including removing collection boxes. And if that wasn't enough, they then began to penalize employees for waiting for an elderly or disabled customer to bring a letter to the door.

The postal board of governors should consider putting people in place who are less interested in enriching themselves than they are in the personal challenge of problem solving. With that approach maybe they'd get someone who would recognize that it's human nature to work harder for a person who one respects, than one who makes it impossible to avoid punishment. Longstanding behavioral research shows that even rats work harder for reward than the do punishment.

In addition, a truly innovative executive would recognize the motivating power of being a part of a winning endeavor. An executive with that kind of insight would undoubtedly have come up with the idea of dividing the various work-floors into groups, and having each group elect their own leader. Then the various groups could compete to meet the unit's goals in productivity, attendance, safety, efficiency, customer service, etc. The groups' ongoing scores could be posted on a bulletin board, then at the end of each quarter the winning groups could be recognized, rewarded, and given certificates of appreciation to go into their personnel files, which could later be used for upward mobility.

Another advantage of such a system would be, since each group would have its own leader, if there's a problem within the group, the supervisor could discuss it with the group's leader to address. That would minimize confrontations between employees and management, save on grievances, free up supervisors for other tasks, and help to identify the natural leaders within the organization. Most important, however, is it would give the employees a sense of self-direction, raise employee morale, and the peer pressure attendant to internal competition would be vastly more effective in enhancing productivity than employee harassment. In short, the employees would begin to work with the postal service, instead of against it.

An insightful executive would also have recognized that one of the biggest drains on postal revenue is simply getting the routes put up for delivery. Due to the misguided impact of excessive downsizing there are literally thousands of unassigned routes across this country on any given day, and in many cases these routes are being put up by employees who aren't familiar with them. This leads directly to miscased and misdelivered mail, and a delay in getting the mail processed. So it should be obvious to any executive focused on his job that every case in the postal system should conform to a uniformed pattern.

Currently the routes are setup to conform to the way they're delivered on the street. This results in a hodgepodge of numbers and streets going in every direction. So to an employee who's unfamiliar with the route it looks like a Chinese crossword puzzle, and

they require a several-day learning curve to get a handle on it. That's a tremendous drain on postal revenue.

All routes should be uniformed in the way that they're setup in the station, then pulled down according to the way that they're walked on the street. That way, a new carrier only has to figure out the route once, when he's pulling it down, instead of every time he picks up a letter.

The routes should be setup in the natural way that the human brain organizes information. Larger streets should be at the top of the case, and smaller streets at the bottom. And everything on the case should go from low to high, with even numbers first, then odd. Then in order to pull the route down the way that the mail is delivered, the swings should be numbered and color coded – blue if the addresses go from low to high, and red if they go from high to low. If the cases were setup that way, anyone would be able to walk up to any route and put it up with no problem – it would be easier on the DPS machines as well, because machines don't like confusion.

There are literally thousands of things the postal service could do to make its operation more efficient, but unfortunately, as my kids used to say, many of these high-paid executives are "stuck on stupid." They never saw a problem that cutting their employees' throats wouldn't fix.

Eric L. Wattree

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Posted at 10:00 AM ET, 01/3/2011

2. Some post office closures delayed
By Ed O'Keefe

The long-feared closure of post offices across the country is being delayed by at least two weeks because of the holiday rush, according to the U.S. Postal Service.

Though USPS declined to provide specific figures, postal officials selected about 160 sites last year to close or merge with nearby locations this week. At least 15 locations will wait two more weeks before shutting down, USPS confirmed Monday.

None of the sites are located in the Washington region. Workers at the closing post offices will be reassigned to other locations.

Some communities are using the delays to make a final plea to USPS to keep their local post offices open. An Albany, N.Y. community group hopes a last-minute appeal to the Postal Regulatory Commission can save their neighborhood postal station.

Postmaster General Patrick R. Donahoe made the decision to wait in order to focus on finalizing the 2010 holiday mailing season, spokeswoman Sue Brennan said.

"The holiday season is the Postal Service's busiest time of year, and the feeling was that the activities involved in closing the offices in question simply created too great a workload for our employees at this particular time," Brennan said.

USPS continues to look "at every possible way to save money and consolidation is a big piece of how we can do that," Brennan said.

The mail agency operates about 36,000 post offices, stations, branches and smaller community facilities nationwide and closing only a few hundred locations will do little to cut significant costs for the Postal Service, which lost \$8.5 billion last fiscal year.

The Postal Service endured weeks of headaches in 2009 after Congressional aides distributed a list of hundreds of sites considered for closure or consolidation with little explanation.

Leave your thoughts in the comments section below

By Ed O'Keefe | January 3, 2011; 10:00 AM ET

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3. U.S. Postal Service expands direct-mail simplified addressing

Story posted: January 3, 2011 - 1:16 pm EDT

Washington, D.C.—The U.S. Postal Service hopes to encourage more small businesses to use its direct-mail services by easing rules for simplified addressing, such as using "Postal Customer" instead of a full name and exact address.

Simplified addressing currently is an accepted option on rural routes and for government mailings, but beginning this week it will be expanded to saturation flat-size mail pieces, for mailing to every address in a geographic area and for such irregular parcels as tubes and rolls delivered on city routes, according to the Postal Service.

The Postal Service said the expansion of simplified addressing can help lower costs by reducing mail preparation time and eliminating the need to purchase address lists.

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4. GoECart Ecommerce Platform Makes Shortlist of Solutions Being Evaluated by China Postal Group for Nationwide Retail Site

Bridgeport, CT (PRWEB) January 3, 2011

GoECart®, the leading provider of on-demand ecommerce solutions that empower retailers to Sell more™ online, is being considered among a handful of ecommerce providers worldwide to power an online retail portal for the China Postal Group (CPG) Corporation. The state-owned China post has 46,000 post office locations throughout the country.

Last week, more than 25 representatives from CPG Corporation Ecommerce Division traveled from China to GoECart's headquarters in Bridgeport, CT. GoECart's CEO Manish Chowdhary demonstrated the benefits of GoECart's software as a service (SaaS) ecommerce solution. Guests and other presenters at the meeting included the mayor of Bridgeport and representatives from the Bridgeport Regional Business Council (BRBC) and the Connecticut Technology Council (CTC).

"In a time when many technology jobs are being outsourced overseas to countries like China, it is a real testament to both CPG's due diligence and GoECart's world class solution that GoECart is a top contender in the selection process. We are proud to have GoECart in Bridgeport and hope they will continue their remarkable wave innovation here for years to come," Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch said.

"It is encouraging to see that GoECart is able to attract large corporations and global organizations based on the strength of their solution in such a competitive economic climate. This really showcases how internet cloud computing can be a true enabler of a global village for both innovative companies like GoECart and forward-looking organizations such as the CPG," added Jack Antonich from the CTC.

Among the features required by the CPG for its ecommerce site are an online marketplace for stamps, an online post office, and a web-based retail marketplace integrating CPG's parcel delivery network of services. The CPG would like to enable Chinese consumers nationally to buy its products through the internet and over mobile devices as well as through offline catalogs, phone-order, and over the counter.

At the meeting, GoECart presented how its award-winning ecommerce solution provides the perfect solution for CPG, because of its comprehensive built-in feature set, Thriving Partner Ecosystem™ of best-of-breed technology and service partners, intergration with social networks like FaceBook®, and unmatched extensibility and flexibility that can be

attained using GoECart's application programming interface (API). In other words, GoECart would provide CPG with an out-of-the-box solution that includes many features they want, and additional features could easily be developed by GoECart's professional services group through custom development—without the limitations imposed by other solutions.

"The fact that such a prestigious global organization such as CPG is seriously considering GoECart speaks volumes how far we've come over the past ten years, and we were proud to host them at our offices last week," Chowdhary said. "We feel that due to our enterprise-class technology, the robust GoECart ecommerce platform, affordable price, our partner network, the strength of our professional services organization, and extensibility through GoECart APIs, GoECart is without question an excellent fit for the CPG. We are confident GoECart will come out on top in CPG's selection process and look forward to continuing the conversation with them in the weeks ahead."

Earlier this year, CPG sent a business delegation to U.S. to explore direct mail industry practices. They visited Direct Marketing Association and Acxiom, and later joined DMA and signed cooperation agreement with Acxiom. During this trip focused on the exploration of ecommerce business development, the group is meeting with National Retail Federation's Digital Division (Shop.Org), attending a full day seminar with U.S. Internet Industry Association, and visiting Amazon.com's headquarters.

About GoECart

GoECart empowers merchants and retailers of all sizes with innovative, on-demand ecommerce solutions designed to address the challenges of the ever-changing web. Hundreds of organizations rely on GoECart every day to Sell more™ merchandise online and compete more effectively. GoECart's proven technology solutions offer the ultimate in reliability, scalability, and flexibility demanded by the world's busiest ecommerce sites. The company's Thriving Partner Ecosystem™ provides the ultimate network of best-in-class ecommerce solutions providers to deliver a rich, immersive experience expected by today's savvy web shoppers. And our team of passionate ecommerce experts keeps our clients at the forefront of ecommerce.

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