



Ambassadors

In September of last year, we were advised by Postal Service officials that they would be conducting service talks for delivery employees, including city letter carriers, intending to promote revenue generation. In December of last year, we were advised by the Postal Service of additional training talks that would be conducted for employees, including city letter carriers, intended to emphasize the importance of retail revenue growth and customer satisfaction.

We met with the Postal Service earlier this year, and we were advised that both sets of service talks are being given. The two sets of service talks were developed by two different departments within the Postal Service. We were advised that a decision was made to proceed with both sets, although similar, in order to stress the *change in mind-set* of the Postal Service.

They indicated that in the past, management preferred that letter carriers not take any extra time to communicate with their customers. The new mind-set, pursuant to the service talks and our meeting, is that letter carriers are *ambassadors* of the Postal Service, and that they must *take the time necessary to communicate as such with our customers*.

Management's service talks recognize that delivery employees are the most visible of all postal employees, and that we have a direct relationship with the community. Therefore, it is imperative that we project the appearance of confident, knowledgeable professionals. As ambassadors of the Postal Service, we are to interact with customers, speak clearly to them, and maintain a professional attitude. We're directed to be patient with our customers and to give them our undivided attention.

Management's service talks advise that, as ambassadors to our local communities, we serve as the Postal Service's information liaison to our customers. It is critical that delivery employees have the right information at the right time. The Postal Service is financially dependent upon our ability to provide quality products and service to our customers, and we are the resource for this information. As ambassadors, we have the opportunity to increase revenue and educate our customers.

Management's service talks go on to explain that our customers should no longer perceive their letter carrier as someone who only shows up every day at the same time, drops and picks up mail, and is gone within seconds. This perception needs to be changed to one of dependable, consistent mail delivery, providing valued information and connecting their needs to our products and services. The

customer needs to see us as personal consultants who know how to meet their needs by recommending the right postal products and services.

In the service talks, management instructs that every time we interact with a customer, we should consider ourselves as their first resource for information and do our best to meet their needs. Providing this information will enhance the relationships we have developed with our customers. Through this empowerment as a representative of the Postal Service, we can continue on a daily basis to spread goodwill and provide valuable first-contact information to grow our business for years.

Letter carriers have always stepped up to the challenge as our jobs have become more difficult and we have taken on additional responsibilities. Obviously, these service talks fail to recognize that even under management's prior ill-conceived mind-set, letter carriers have for decades earned the respect and trust of their customers for their efforts in and beyond the line of duty. So while being polite, attentive, and wanting to provide good service to customers may be a new "mind-set" for management, *it's been the mind-set of letter carriers all along*.

What's really new here is that management now wants us to use the relationships we have developed with our customers to educate them on our products and services, as we now do with the Customer Connect program. The additional revenue that such education can generate for the Postal Service is good for all of us.

The problem is that management has created conflicts in achieving this goal. While some departments recognize the value of letter carriers as "ambassadors," other departments are developing programs that exclude basic carrier functions when evaluating carrier routes. Some departments recognize that carriers need additional time in the office and on the street if they are to serve as personal consultants and information liaisons to their customers—providing them with the most current information on products and services. Meanwhile, other departments don't even want to provide the basic time necessary for carriers to process and deliver the mail.

Pursuant to these service talks, management has made obtaining and updating the product and service information, as well as providing and explaining it to our customers, part of our duties. As with any other duties, if you are unable to complete them within the prescribed time, inform management, and they will instruct you what to do. ☒