



‘Heck of a job, Brownie’

As letter carriers, we see the role of USPS as straightforward: to collect, sort and deliver the country’s mail. This service is conducted *for* the American citizens and businesses with universal service at universal rates to all parts of the country. Yet we’ve seen where USPS leaders have forced patrons to use cluster boxes in lieu of delivery to their front door. If some neighborhoods have service to the door and others curbside, is that universal? Even some businesses don’t have service to the front door. Yet our competitors deliver to the door.

The elimination of collection boxes seemed another questionable tactic by those same USPS leaders. What’s the harm of having the blue collection box on the corner with the USPS logo on it? That free advertising seems very valuable. Do they really have the American patrons’ best interests in mind? This downgrading of USPS services occurred while USPS increased its HQ staff from 1,712 in 2002 to 2,856 in 2007.¹ Headquarters-related field units also increased from 3,848 to 4,527 during that time. I’m sure the agency’s obligation would have been better served if those bureaucrats were collecting, sorting and delivering mail.

On March 2, Postmaster General John Potter presented a plan entitled “Envisioning America’s Future Postal Service.” The associated action plan paper summarizes a proposal to downsize the people’s post office, reducing the number of delivery days per week.

The PMG’s solution is to cease delivery, by one day per week, for now. That’s the idea of USPS leaders? It sounds like the brainstorm of our enemies. The Postal Service offers one thing—mail service. So what does USPS believe to be the solution of maintaining universal service? *Less service!* They want to grow the business by shutting it down. I guess this is our “Heck of a job, Brownie” moment.

There are still more USPS employees who do not deliver mail than there are letter carriers. To add insult to injury, management continues to make craft employees into temporary supervisors. How many times are you going to count the same mail? Doesn’t the machine count the mail? Doesn’t DOIS perform all the calculations supervisors used to? Managed service points and global positioning show where the letter carrier is all day; why

the duplication? When does automation eliminate those management jobs? Yes, the USPS must cut the fat, must right-size. Former Postmaster General Marvin Runyon understood how it works—if you’re not handling mail, then you’re expendable. Remind your supervisor of that. Better yet, let’s remind USPS HQ of that.

Here’s one of the big lies associated with this decision, as listed on slide 32 of the “Enduring a Viable USPS” presentation: “Five-day delivery is supported by 66 percent of consumers.” Here’s my first question to USPS: What do you mean by “consumers”? Aren’t all American citizens stakeholders in the U.S. Postal Service? Do you mean mailers? Big mailers? Recipients? USPS HQ may not realize it, but we deliver to every home, so if a poll is necessary, we can easily send a post card to each American home and ask about their postal needs. I suggest that more than 66 percent of Americans would not have approved of the USPS decision to use postal revenue to hire the Boston Consulting Group or McKinsey & Company for their predictions.

Here are the reasons six-day delivery must continue:

- This is the opportunity to recover the parcel business. The same information revolution that diverts letter communication away from USPS creates many more parcels sent to residential delivery points. If USPS takes a fraction of that work, we’ll thrive.
- USPS already can claim “greener delivery” of parcels on the assumption that USPS letter carriers deliver to each U.S. address six days a week anyway and therefore offer the industry’s lowest fuel consumption per delivery.
- The government can offer greenhouse carbon credits when using the USPS delivery network instead of inefficient alternatives.

Before USPS cuts service to America, before USPS turns its back on the responsibility of being a solid ecological alternative, it must become a lean machine. We’ve done and will continue to do our part by seeking fair route adjustments, by seeking Customer Connect leads, and by providing reliable service to America. It’s time for the bureaucrats to join with us, or get out of our way. ✉

1. U.S. Postal Service Workforce Size and Employment Categories, 1987–2007; Congressional Research Service Report for Congress.