



A world of possibilities

Albert Einstein once said: “Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.” For centuries, the A-to-B logic behind the Postal Service has been for customers to put postage on a letter or package and letter carriers would then deliver it. Today, that A-to-B logic is still of value to the American public and I have no doubt it will continue to be, far into the future.

But we can't stop there—especially in a world that is ever-changing. It's time to add some imagination to our logic.

Which is why, last month, the National Association of Letter Carriers and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers sponsored a UNI Global Union Innovations Meeting in Washington, DC. In attendance were union leaders from post offices in 40 countries. The concept behind the Innovations Meeting, held in conjunction with the UNI Post & Logistics Conference, was to create a venue where innovative ideas about how to expand upon delivery networks could be shared and discussed.

The presentations and conversations that took place during the Innovations Meeting were interesting and enlightening. The possibilities for expansion of services are indeed endless. Presentations during the conference covered everything from banking services, vote-by-mail and virtual mail to the use of postal vehicles as moving sensors to monitor air quality, road quality, gas leaks, foreign substances in the air and to collect weather data.

Many foreign countries are already providing some of the services discussed, with success.

In Germany, customers have the option of sending an Internet letter—a replica of an actual letter. It identifies the sender and receiver, remains confidential and is tracked. It is not an e-mail and is not spam but is considered legally binding. The postal service prints the letter, places it in an envelope and then delivers it in the traditional manner. The service is targeted toward large businesses.

A similar service is available in Switzerland, where customers can send either physical letters or virtual letters and the postal service is the interface.

In the UK, customers have the option of Royal Timed

Delivery Service—an add-on to traditional standard delivery service. The service offers same-day delivery within a city or within multiple cities and guarantees delivery within a 15-minute window on either side of the projected time.

Brazil has developed new postal banking services, where customers can even apply for loans and receive retirement payments.

The collective message from around the world is this: No other company has the network that postal services have. No one else has workers walking or driving down every street, every day, delivering products. We should be expanding service, not systematically shutting it down.

But, unfortunately, we can't count on postal management to lead us there. For them, going from A to B these days involves the step-by-step, piece-by-piece destruction of America's postal service.

All management appears to want to do is manage the decline of the Postal Service. DOIS says: Last one out, turn out the lights.

The American people deserve better. The American people deserve a postal service. They also deserve the benefits that an ever-changing, ever-growing, ever-innovating delivery network such as ours can provide if only those in charge of the Postal Service's fate would open up their minds and imagine.

The nations' letter carriers believe that the answer to the challenges of the market is to grow; improve service; develop and expand new products and services; and to utilize in creative and productive ways the unique last-mile delivery network. And that is precisely what President Rolando told Postmaster General Donahoe in his opening statement at the start of negotiations.

While the Postal Service may be prepared to surrender, we are not. We are ready to move boldly into the future—which is why we co-hosted the UNI Innovations Meeting.

The Postal Service has continually evolved over the last 200 years to meet the needs of this great country. Its growth has always depended on adding new functions while continuing the old for as long as they are needed. Our past can be an inspiration for the future.

Imagination will take us there.

