

Customer Connect adds up for USPS

By touching every address in the U.S. at least six days a week, letter carriers naturally develop special relationships with all of their customers. Since USPS' Customer Connect program began in 2003, thousands of carriers have successfully leveraged their interactions with business customers to encourage them to use the Postal Service instead of relying on private delivery and mailing services. Below are some recent stories about Customer Connect leads submitted by letter carriers that have helped USPS earn new revenue.

Oakridge Hobbies and Toys

South Suburban Merged, IL Branch 4016 member **Keith Polk** noticed that a customer was using competitors of USPS for its deliveries. Oakridge Hobbies and Toys is a business that was new to this area but has been family-owned and operated for 30 years, serving generations of customers. Owner Sue Robb decided to move to a smaller brick-and-mortar location and concentrate on its e-commerce site

for the majority of its business moving forward. This business is recognized as the largest online toy and hobby retailer in the Chicagoland area.

"I don't like to see my businesses using anyone but us," Polk told his office. So he asked Robb if she would be interested in receiving information to save money on shipping costs. The owner said she was interested, so Polk submitted Oakridge Hobbies and Toys as a Customer Connect lead.

A headquarters sales field representative had a meeting with Robb to evaluate the company's shipping situation. Oakridge Hobbies and Toys had been



using UPS as its carrier, but by the end of the meeting, Robb was interested in knowing more about how USPS could help reduce shipping costs.

The sales representative presented USPS Priority Mail and First Class shipping solutions that could save 6 percent compared to the competition.

Without Polk taking the time and caring enough to talk with his customers, USPS might not have won the business. This opportunity turned into a sale that will generate an estimated \$151,145 in new revenue for the USPS as the business continues to grow.

School Maintenance Supply



School Maintenance Supply, a business in Ohio. His lead produced \$23,700 in annualized revenue for the Postal Service. USPS presented a certificate and pin to thank McMullan for truly delivering the brand.

Unique Beauty

Benton Harbor, MI Branch 560 member **Jevonne Stevens** noticed that

a company on his route, Unique Beauty, had been using UPS to pick up its packages, so he stopped in to ask owner Omar Suleman how much he

mails and asked if he'd be interested in learning more about what the Postal Service could do for him.

Unique Beauty is a new shipper of wigs and hair accessories throughout the U.S. as well as abroad. Stevens found out that the company will be sending approximately 75 to 100 packages per day and is planning to get to 200 packages per day soon, as Suleman was planning to start selling on eBay alongside his own e-commerce site. The carrier then submitted a lead.

A representative followed up on the opportunity, and Stevens' lead resulted in \$249,600 in new revenue for USPS.

Angry Supplements

A few weeks after a new gym opened on his route, South Florida Branch 1071 member **Alfredo Bonilla** met the owners, Diego Bavaro and Ruben Pierabella. It wasn't long before they were asking Bonilla to stop by to pick up 20 or so packages from their business, Angry



Keith Polk



Robin Hudson

Supplements, on a regular basis.

One day, Bavaro approached Bonilla and said he was spending too much money shipping with other companies. He asked about the different types of services offered by the Postal Service. Bonilla put him in contact with a USPS sales representative, who made the sale, estimated to be worth \$409,630.

Angry Supplements has continued to grow since, and the company is currently shipping between 500 and 1,000 packages per day. On most days, Bonilla fills his LLV to the roof with packages, and on other days he must make two trips to complete the pickup.

According to Bonilla, the company is now spending close to \$120,000 per month on postage alone. “That’s why it’s important to stay vigilant,” said Bonilla, an Army veteran who also serves his station as a safety captain. “Get to know the businesses on your route. Sometimes you don’t have to find a lead—the lead will find you.”

Bonilla was recognized before a large gathering of NALC and USPS representatives at the South Florida District Office. District Manager Jeffery Taylor and Region 9 Regional Administrative Assistant Don Lyerly both thanked Bonilla for his dedication to their customers and his enthusiasm in helping the business grow.

Successful leads in Texas

Letter carriers have been coming up with solid leads in the state of Texas. Austin Branch 181 member **Kristina Coll** submitted a lead for a business on her route that was shipping nutritional supplements. A field sales representative met with owner Preston Bare, who was using USPS First Class packages for items under a pound and a competitor for other items, which accounted for about 70 percent of its business.

The sales rep discussed various Priority Mail products with Bare, who saw the value of using the Postal Service for

packages up to 20 pounds. Bare was convinced that USPS would be a good fit for his growing business, which is looking to open a second location within months.

This lead resulted in approximately \$114,422 in new revenue for USPS.

Meanwhile, Houston Branch 283 member **JoAnn Brown** submitted a Customer Connect lead and followed up with the local Customer Connect coordinator to ensure follow-through. Her customer appreciated having someone assist the company to save on shipping.



JoAnn Brown

The business was introduced to USPS’ Priority Flat Rate services. This earned USPS \$97,000 in new revenue.

And Beaumont, TX Branch 842 member **Robin Hudson** noticed FedEx trucks regularly making pickups at a business on his route. Tea & Coffee America is a modest business and owner Tony Tortorice sells tea and coffee products online via Amazon.

Hudson asked his customer about speaking with a USPS representative to consider the savings he could find shipping with the Postal Service and then submitted a Customer Connect lead.

A business development specialist followed up on it and met with Tortorice. The BDS learned that the Priority shoe box would be a perfect fit for the company’s most popular item to ship. Priority Flat Rate packaging would satisfy his other shipping needs as well.

The new revenue from Tea & Coffee America’s business is expected to generate \$97,916 annually. This joint effort in helping secure the future of the Postal Service began with the eyes and ears of Hudson, who was presented with a “Deliver the Brand” pin and certificate for his efforts. **PR**

Contest recognizes successful Customer Connect offices

On March 17, Northland District Customer Connect Coordinator and St. Paul, MN Branch 28 member Kelly Buesgens, NALC Region 7 National Business Agent Chris Wittenburg and Northland’s district manager wrapped up the last of three celebratory catered breakfasts for the top three district offices for Customer Connect in FY16.

At the start of FY16, Northland District announced a Customer Connect contest to help increase carrier participation, lead submissions and to help build revenue. The office/station in each category (small, medium and large) to meet all the following requirements at end of FY16 would win a catered breakfast.

The requirements were that each office had to be:

- Top in number of “quality” leads, carrier participation and revenue
- 100 percent on all service talks completed, signed and certified online
- Audits completed by the Customer Connect station coordinator and the management rep

The winners in each category were Alexandria (small office), Anoka (medium office) and Richfield (large office). Each office did an excellent job of identifying potential customers, using tools and their expertise to turn potential into results.

In 2016, the offices had 37 carriers submit a total of 79 fresh new sales leads. These leads resulted in four new sales, generating more than \$59,000 of revenue for USPS. The Customer Connect bi-weekly report provided by USPS Headquarters and the MPOO district report were used as the data source for verification of leads, participation, revenue and carrier count per office.

Congratulations to Alexandria, Anoka and Richfield Customer Connect station coordinators, Keith Miller, Gregory Rygg, Jeanne Spratt and Richard Langsdorf, and to all the employees for seizing opportunities. **PR**