

Meet the new boss



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We have a new postmaster general by the name of Louis DeJoy. He was appointed on June 15 and has relatively little experience with the Postal Service. He has been in the position for less than two months as I write this and already has announced a restructuring plan for the Postal Service. This is nothing new.

The last postmaster general who came from the outside was Marvin Runyon. He was appointed on July 6, 1992, and served as postmaster general for about six years. His nickname was Carvin' Marvin. Some of you may remember him. He restructured the Postal Service as well. I think the biggest mistake he made when he restructured was that he

split the departments of Mail Processing and Delivery. After that restructure, Mail Processing rode on one track and Delivery rode on another. Mail Processing looked out for its own interests without regard to the interests and needs of the Delivery arm of the Postal Service. That problem is still true today. Any restructuring plan should address this situation and put these two entities back under the same roof.

There is a lot of suspicion that Postmaster General DeJoy has come here to destroy the Postal Service. I really hope he did not come here to slow down the mail, seek to destroy customer service or drive our package business away. If this turns out to be the case, he better be ready for a fight, as he will meet great opposition from the employees and their unions, from lawmakers and from customers. These are all powerful forces!

Mr. DeJoy, if you are on the up and up about coming here to maintain universal service at uniform prices and truly desire to make the Postal Service more efficient, you should consider listening to the employees who actually do the work before you listen to the folks from Operational Programs Support (OPS).

We have a City Delivery Task Force that is supposed to seek ways to better do our work and make us more efficient while not sacrificing customer service. When I served on that task force, I always promoted the principle that while testing different ways to do our work, success or failure must be gauged by whether we use more or fewer work hours as a result of the test.

Here is a true story: OPS has been unilaterally testing a stale concept that was doomed for failure from the beginning for over a year. Worse still, it is now implementing one of the worst aspects of the test nationwide without any regard for efficiency.

I am talking about the Case Consolidation test. The concept here is to separate office work from street work by having a few letter carriers perform the office duties on multiple routes while most of the letter carriers come to work and go directly to the street. The theory is that the delivery unit will use fewer work hours through a reduction in office time used each day.

This concept has been tested three other times over the years and failed miserably each time. This fourth attempt at reinventing a wheel that does not roll produced worse results than the three earlier attempts. You do not have to take my word for it. Just have someone provide you with an analysis of work hours used prior to the test compared to work hours used during the test in the 62 sites involved and you will see what I am talking about.

The one change made this time that caused the Case Consolidation test to fail even more miserably than the previous attempts was the aspect of reducing casing equipment by requiring letter carriers to use six-shelf cases. The trouble with using a six-shelf case to sort mail is there is only six inches of space between shelves. Most of the mail we case these days is taller than 6 inches, which makes it more difficult to place a piece of mail in a case that has six shelves. The end result is that casing mail in a six-shelf case creates a natural inefficiency because it takes longer to do the work. This fact was proved during the Case Consolidation test.

Despite this fact, OPS has moved on to a new initiative called Postal Service Sorting Equipment Reconciliation (SER). Translation: Convert every route in the country to six-shelf cases. This is like creating an even worse spin-off to a horrible sitcom. The result will be that it will take letter carriers longer to case and pull-down mail, resulting in less efficiency.

Mr. DeJoy, if you truly desire to make the Postal Service more efficient, here are a few simple suggestions to consider that could be implemented immediately in the City Delivery Letter Carrier Craft:

1. Do not let the folks in OPS continue to test/implement ideas that are inefficient and make no sense.
2. End the Case Consolidation test in the 31 sites that are still going right now. This test will end later this year in these sites anyway. Why wait?
3. Do not implement the SER initiative described above. Converting casing equipment to six shelves for every route in the country will result in an increase of overtime use in every office.
4. Demand contract compliance at every level of the organization.
5. Start utilizing the City Delivery Task Force to create and test innovative ideas to achieve efficiency as intended.

Mr. DeJoy, time will tell if you are better, worse, or just the same as the old boss. Your choice.