

Customer Connect adds up for USPS

By touching every address in the United States at least six days a week, letter carriers naturally develop special relationships with their customers. Since USPS's 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, rather than rely 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.

Pennsylvania carriers honored on Customer Connect Day

The Eagleville, PA, post office celebrated Customer Connect Day on Nov. 17, 2020, when the office honored two Norristown, PA Branch 542 members whose leads resulted in almost \$900,000 in new revenue for the Postal Service.

Drew Ritchie, a 26-year carrier, had recently submitted two leads through Customer Connect that brought in a combined revenue of more than \$600,000.

One lead was for a golf apparel company that was looking to eliminate surcharges and enhance customer delivery expectations. "I inquired with [the employees] at the place, 'Who does your shipping?'" Ritchie recalled, and then managed to get the store contact information to pass along to a USPS sales team.

Ritchie's second lead was for a cleaning supply company that was unhappy with the service provided by another shipper and looking for better rates and improved shipping times. "It was at the start of the pandemic, and they were overburdened" due to the demand for hand sanitizer and other cleaning products, he explained. "I said, 'I'll have someone talk to you.'"

The carrier said that if he sees packages from another shipping company sitting inside a store, he asks the owners if they would consider switching. "I'm not shy," he said. "Just don't be afraid to ask."

Meanwhile, 33-year carrier **Donald Felice Jr.** submitted a lead for a company that sells exfoliators and body sponges. The lead resulted in a shipping deal worth more than \$287,000.

The company, Clean Logic, had recently moved to a storefront on Felice's route. "I saw they had a huge warehouse in the back," the carrier recalled, and he wondered if USPS could pick up the company's shipping business. When the store opened, he went in and talked to one of the owners.

"I asked if they were interested in talking to the Postal Service," Felice said, "and she gave me her business card." He then passed the information to the sales team, who closed the deal.

"I have a great rapport with customers," the carrier explained about his sales tactics. "They see me in uniform, and I talk to them and make a personal contact." Once he has a familiarity with the store and its management, he asks them if they would be interested in saving money by shipping with USPS.

"It's really not that hard—everyone's interested in saving money," Felice added. "It's just a matter of making that initial contact."

The two carriers' achievement was celebrated in Washington, DC, as well. "Drew and Donald served their customers well by noticing that they could get better service from USPS," said Mary Anderson, the small-business engagement director at USPS Headquarters. "It is important that we recognize the efforts of all our carriers who help drive new revenue for the Postal Service."

At pizza restaurant, a carrier delivers for USPS

When San Diego, CA Branch 70 member **Daniel Galvan** saw a new pizza restaurant opening up on his route, he decided to use his tried-and-tested sales pitch to encourage the owner to use USPS to drum up attention for the store's opening.

While delivering mail, he talked to the owner, Sunil Gakhreja, and asked him if he had ever considered mailing out flyers through



Daniel Galvan (r) and store owner Sunil Gakhreja

the Postal Service's Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) program. Gakhreja was intrigued. "He was asking a lot of questions," the nine-year carrier recalled. "So, I gave him all the information and got his information" in return.

Galvan then took the information back to the office and submitted the lead. When the sales team followed up, they spoke to Gakhreja about the merits of the EDDM campaign; the restaurant has subsequently done two advertising campaigns, generating \$30,000 in revenue for USPS.

This is not the first lead that Galvan has found for the Postal Service. He says that he keeps an eye out on his route for any potential new customers. "I try to look out for everything: new businesses, [customers who] ship out packages every day, or have heavy outgoing mail."

Galvan says talking about the pluses of the EDDM program is a great way to convince business owners to speak to a sales representative. "You can tell them, 'Have you thought about advertising? We deliver flyers to every house in the area,'" the carrier explained. "'Whatever works best for your business,' I tell them, and they all seem very interested."

Most important of all, Galvan says, is knowing the details behind what USPS can offer. "You have to learn about the service we provide, and get informed," he said. "If [the customer] has the correct information, then most likely they will follow through." **PR**