

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.

Martin & MacArthur

"In this day and age, time and money are important. But nothing beats great service," said Stacy Hanohano, warehouse manager of Honolulu retailer Martin & MacArthur, to describe the relationship she has with Honolulu Branch 860 member **Patrick Walter**.

Walter had asked Hanohano if a postal representative could contact her about changing her company's shipping provider. Up until then, Martin & MacArthur was using three different companies for its shipping. The carrier

told Hanohano that he didn't want just some of her business; he wanted it all. With the company's consent, he turned in a Customer Connect lead.

A business development specialist and field sales representative worked with Martin & MacArthur and convinced the company to ship exclusively with USPS. The agreement encompasses the shipping needs of all 14 Martin & MacArthur's retail locations in addition to its warehouse.

When Hanohano shared her satisfaction with the agreement with company owner Douglas MacArthur, he decided to highlight the agreement by offering their online customers free shipping when using USPS during the customers' introductory month.

"If you're a company that ships, the relationship you have with your carrier is the key to whether you continue using that company," Hanohano said. She noted that her selection of USPS as the retailer's shipper of choice was largely due to the company's relationship with and confidence in Walter.

The carrier said that he strives to establish a good relationship with his customers by being friendly and always going the extra mile for them, whether they're a big company or a single customer. "We carriers need to know our products and to always be on the lookout for opportunities when they appear," he said. "It helps when you know your customers and their needs."

This success story resulted in \$124,000 revenue for the Postal Service.

Runners Soul

When running shoe and apparel retailer Runners Soul entered the world of online sales, it found that it had many hurdles to overcome when



Patrick Walter's (l) lead led Martin & MacArthur's Warehouse Manager Stacy Hanohano to ship exclusively with USPS.

Letter carriers Paul Bair (l) and Steve Thrift (r) worked with Business Development Specialist Chris Hoch (c) to get Runners Soul's business.



it came to shipping. After sharing some of its needs with Spokane, WA Branch 442 member **Paul Bair**, the letter carrier submitted a Customer Connect lead to the post office's small business team. A business development specialist spoke to both Bair and the regular carrier on the route, fellow Branch 442 member **Steve Thrift**, and then met with Runners Soul Shipping Manager Jesse Fayant. The USPS representative helped Fayant with some immediate solutions for his needs, then determined that the needs of this business warranted field sales assistance from USPS Headquarters because of the size and scope of its operation and growth. The store has two locations in Spokane.

A headquarters representative met with Runners Soul's decision-makers and discovered that both retail locations were being affected by road construction that was hurting sales. Advertising of any kind was not helping, since shoppers were avoiding the area due to the construction. Heading into the holiday season, Runners Soul needed to find a way to boost sales while controlling costs.

USPS advised Runners Soul to expand its e-commerce strategy to encompass multiple online marketplaces and presented the value of Priority Mail in helping to control shipping costs while providing transit times faster than competitors' ground services. Runners Soul agreed and began implementing the proposed solution. USPS coordinators arrange a daily collection for Runners Soul's now rapidly growing shipping volume.

Helped by Bair and Thrift's lead, the Runners Soul's new e-commerce strategy has resulted in \$109,000 in new USPS revenue.

Victory Coffees

When Denver Branch 47 member **Mary Biles** noticed big potential with a company on her route, she immediately submitted a Customer Connect lead.

Victory Coffees is a veteran-owned and -operated, organic grown, fair-traded international blends monthly subscription coffee program. It sells whole bean, ground and K-cup varieties. Cade Courtley, a former Navy Seal, is the founder of Victory Coffees and appeared on national television twice in January for the company, on "Shark Tank" and "Fox and Friends."

The district sales manager met with the coffee company to discuss Postal Service options. Victory Coffees' products were a great fit for the USPS Priority cubic solution, and the company committed to using USPS as its shipping solution.

Biles' quick response to get assistance to her customer was the vital

piece that made this lead successful. Victory Coffees processed 3,500 orders within the first week after meeting with USPS. The trending value of this lead is \$288,688, with a potential value of more than \$1 million.

St. Louis Medical Supply

St. Louis Branch 343 member **Steven Powers** took advantage of his daily opportunity to speak with his customer, St. Louis Medical Supply, and in doing so, he discovered the potential for new revenue. The company ships out various medical supplies and was looking for a shipping solution when it came to sending breast pumps to residential addresses, so Powers submitted a Customer Connect lead.

After some research regarding what the normal package profile would be and the estimated volume, the lead



Letter carrier Mary Biles (c) submitted a Customer Connect lead for Denver-based Victory Coffees.

Carrier becomes coordinator

Wichita, KS Branch 201 member Gordon Kirkhart has been the Customer Connect coordinator at the Munger Station in Wichita since 2012. In his time in that position, he has submitted more than 40 leads, and several have turned into sales for the Postal Service.

In May 2013, he submitted a lead for Domino's Pizza that turned into a sale worth \$56,000; in the fall of 2016, he submitted a lead for Pahara Jewelry Design that resulted in a sale that generated \$44,000 for the Postal Service. Through his persistence and dedication to the program, Kirkhart's total sales to date have generated approximately \$240,000 for the Postal Service in new revenue.

The carrier was recently asked to join a team made up of letter carriers, rural carriers and managers to kick off a Customer Connect campaign in Wichita. Tasked with acting as the Customer Connect coordinator for all of Wichita, Kirkhart has recruited 10 letter carriers to act as coordinators for the seven stations in Wichita, and he has personally trained most of them. He developed a training packet for each coordinator to use as a guide and teaches the class during orientation for new employees that stresses the importance of their getting involved and making a difference. Kirkhart has been pleasantly surprised by the number of new carriers who have chosen to step up and help drive the program.

Kirkhart approached the Wichita postmaster with several problems that he discovered from feedback he got from his fellow letter carriers, such as difficulty receiving follow-ups on their leads. Thanks to the team's commitment, those problems are being addressed and resolved. The postmaster provides Kirkhart time each week to travel around the city to visit the various stations. The carrier tries to arrive at the stations first thing in the morning to attend their stand-up talks and get feedback, and he has worked diligently to help solve problems. As a result of Kirkhart's actions, the percentage of letter carriers participating in Customer Connect in Wichita has been steadily rising.



John Bonzo's (c) lead for Pro Am golf has led to nearly \$900,000 in annual revenue. Pictured (l to r) congratulating Bonzo are Manager Customer Service Operations Jim Hall, Business Development Specialist Gregory Peppers, Gateway District Customer Connect Coordinator Judy Bitzer and Region 5 Regional Administrative Assistant Charles Sexton.

was transferred to field sales for more in-depth technical and cost assistance. After field sales completed the cost analysis and presented the results to the customer, St. Louis Medical Supply decided to ship with the U.S. Postal Service. The total estimated new revenue is \$96,782.

Pro Am Golf

When St. Louis Branch 343 member **John Bonzo** initially submitted a Customer Connect lead for Pro Am Golf, the company was not interested at the time. But the carrier continued to follow up with the company, and after the shipping company that Pro Am Golf had been using decided to implement additional handling charges, Pro Am Golf was ready to speak with the Postal Service.

Pro Am Golf ships out golf equipment and other supplies for themselves and as a third-party filler for two other golf companies. After a conversation uncovered the needs of Pro Am Golf, it was determined that USPS could provide cost savings and shipping solutions.

The company wanted a shipping analysis completed, so a field sales representative performed a data analysis and determined that the best way to evaluate USPS' abilities to fulfill Pro Am Golf's needs was to conduct a couple of

test shipments and measure the results. After the completion of both tests, Pro Am Golf decided to bring even more volume to the Postal Service than originally discussed. The total estimated annual revenue for USPS now surpasses \$900,000, thanks in part to Bonzo's knowledge and persistence.

Asphalt Paving & Concrete

St. Louis Branch 343 member **Charley Key** knew the owner of a local business, Asphalt Paving & Concrete, from the local VFW, where he is a member. Asphalt Paving's owner was looking for a way to mail greater amounts of advertising and asked Key about it. The company isn't on Key's route, but the carrier knew that the post office could help the company with its advertising needs, so he turned in a Customer Connect lead.

Asphalt Paving had been using small generic postcards to advertise. It was limited to the number of pieces and the design, and it was paying more than it needed to. A business development specialist introduced Asphalt Paving to USPS' Business Mail Entry Unit (BMEU). Going with BMEU saved the company money while being able to send out larger mail pieces and more pieces per day. This lead brings in an estimated annualized revenue of \$39,000. **PR**