

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 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.

Online sales of auto parts fuel three winning leads

Online sales of auto parts have revved up in the last few years, and three sharp letter carriers have directed some of that lucrative e-commerce parcel traffic into USPS's lane.

Tom Brumma of Fairfield, IA Branch 726 retired on June 1 but was called back in for a victory lap in September for an auto-parts lead he had submitted more than a year ago. Vintage Power Wagons (VPW) has a large presence in Fairfield; its annual three-day rally draws vintage car lovers from all over the country to the Iowa burg.

The business is on an "aux" (auxiliary) route that Brumma often carried, and after noticing that it shipped a lot of parcels via UPS and FedEx, he visited VPW in his down time to make a case for USPS. The retiree, who served as shop steward as well as president and secretary for the branch, also was its Customer Connect coordinator. "Any programs that came through, I



Brumma

kind of spearheaded them," he said.

His dedication to the Postal Service paid off in an estimated \$46,000 in annual revenue from the lead—and continues on in retirement.

"I just had lunch with the new union steward...trying to help her out," he said; he also offered to help with Amazon parcels during the holiday season. But he's a fan of retirement, too: "It's the first winter I don't have to go out. It snowed three inches and I absolutely love it."

Altrom America, an auto parts store in Indianapolis, IN, was "leery" of working with the Postal Service, according to **Therese Keeney**, Customer Connect coordinator for Hoosier City Branch 39. "They didn't have prompt service before," she said. "I told them I promise your packages will be picked up and scanned in every day." She vowed to send in a shipping expert and sweetened the pitch by saying that she believed the company was entitled to a discount.

Altrom agreed to let USPS make its case, and when all was said and done, the company—which had been shipping out more than 80 percent of its parcels with FedEx—accepted the Customer Connect team's money-saving solution and switched its volume



Keeney

to the Postal Service. "It's been a very good thing," Keeney said of her summertime lead, with \$96,700 in estimated revenue for USPS.

After bidding on his route, city carrier **Larry Actkinson** of Stockton, CA Branch 213 introduced himself to one of its businesses, Production Car Care, a purveyor of automotive cleaning and detailing products. "I explained if there were ever anything they need, or they have questions, I would be happy to help." Over time the carrier had several chats with workers at Production, and in one, Actkinson mentioned that one of the services USPS provides is having a specialist discuss ways of cutting shipping and mailing costs.

"The supervisor that is in charge there, Beto, has become a friend—I actually deliver mail to his parents on my route as well—and he said yes, he'd like to have a specialist contact him," he said.

After a visit from field sales and the local business development specialist, that supervisor, Beto Casillas, was sold on a plan that reduced costs 10 to 25 percent and provided the Postal Service with \$65,030 in new revenue. "They did a lot of shipping with a local company here, and with FedEx, and now they are doing a lot more business with the United States Postal Service," Actkinson said. **PR**



Actkinson



Paul Salgado, right, of San Bernardino, CA Branch 411, with Aaron Segal, manager of the Best Western Date Tree Hotel in Indio. Salgado turned in a Priority Mail-focused lead for the hotel that resulted in more than \$86,000 for the Postal Service.

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