Australia Post and Beyond Blue mental health campaign expands to five million households

13-05-2024

Five million mailboxes, including every regional and rural home across Australia, will receive a special prepaid postcard this May, thanks to an expanded campaign between Australia Post and Beyond Blue.

In response to the pressing need for mental health support, Australia Post and Beyond Blue have significantly increased distribution of their annual campaign, adding an extra one million postcards to the Connection Postcard program, now in its fourth year. These postcards carry important mental health messages to encourage greater community connection and support mental wellbeing across the country.

With research* indicating that nearly one in three Australians grapple with loneliness, especially in remote or regional areas, this initiative offers a simple way for people to connect.

Millions of Australians will open their mailbox this May to discover a newly designed two-part 'Connection Postcard'. One part includes important mental health information and Beyond Blue contact details; while the detachable second part includes a pre-paid postcard for recipients to pen a personalised note to send to a friend or loved one.

Created by regional Australian artist, Jocelyn Proust, the brand-new illustration includes two fairy wrens in a vibrant natural setting to signify the power of communication for connection and begins with the words, "sharing this postcard because I care".

Australia Post General Manager Community and Stakeholder Engagement, Nicky Tracey, said Australia Post is proud to be expanding the campaign in 2024.

"We know that when we connect, we feel better. This is why we're delighted to be a longstanding partner of Beyond Blue, helping to connect people with each other and to mental health information.

"Since 2020, over 16 million Connection Postcards have been delivered, providing Australians, including those in regional and remote communities, access to Beyond Blue's incredible resources and the opportunity to connect with someone they care about. In fact, last year's Connection Postcard campaign demonstrated that 95%** of recipients who sent on the postcard felt more positive," Ms Tracey said.

Journalist, TV presenter, mental health advocate and Beyond Blue ambassador of 13 years, Brad McEwan, has joined the campaign to encourage more people to send a connection postcard this year.

"Having experienced loss through mental health issues and also having grown up in a regional town myself, I know the power of checking in with friends and family to increase social connection. It might not seem like a lot, but these Postcards pack a powerful message, beyond just the words on the paper. For the five million households opening their mailbox to find a connection postcard, I'd encourage you to please take a moment to read the message and think about someone in your life that would love to hear from you. This simple gesture can make a profound impact on someone's life," Mr McEwan said.

Source: Australia Post

Postmaster General and CEO Louis DeJoy's Remarks During May 9, 2024, Postal Service Board of Governors Meeting

09-05-2024

The below remarks are as prepared for delivery by Postmaster General and CEO Louis DeJoy during the open session meeting of the Postal Service Board of Governors on May 9, 2024.

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The second quarter has been an engaging one as we have started to intensify the transformation efforts of our facilities and operations to reduce our costs, grow our revenue, engage our employees, improve our infrastructure, and serve our customers in a modern, efficient, and more logistically sophisticated manner.

During this third quarter, we had three Regional Processing and Distribution Centers significantly activated, four partially activated, and another four under design or construction. We have begun to make improvements to more than 20 Local Processing Centers and have launched 25 new Sorting and Delivery Centers.

These initiatives have required the investment of billions of dollars to renovate old or add new facilities; the repositioning or hiring of tens of thousands of people; the installation or relocation of hundreds of complex mail and package processing systems; and the scheduling and rescheduling of thousands of daily air and ground transportation routes.

This effort has been engaged with historic intensity by the postal leadership and its employees across the country to carry out a long overdue transformational change.

We are also in the process of redefining our Priority network, so that it leverages our ground assets as we strive to produce a totally integrated mail and package network that will reduce cost and improve and grow revenue so that we can be financially self-sufficient as we are required to be by law.

In addition, we have rolled out our new Environmental Sustainability Plan targeting impressive reductions in carbon emissions through 2030. This year, we are accepting over 27,000 new vehicles – the most in a quarter century. Ten thousand of these vehicles that we will accept this year will be electric, and we are well on our way to having the required 10,000 live charging ports across 75 sites by the end of this calendar year.

Recently, we have reorganized over 3,000 sales personnel and supporting organizations to create new focus and inspire winning attitudes to compete for increased revenue for the United States Postal Service. And we are achieving that growth.

In terms of costs, year to date we reduced transportation costs by $700 million compared to the same six-month period last year. We have worked hard to align schedules, implement new processes, and improve productivity to reduce workhours by nearly 9 million hours over the same six-month period last year and over 11 million hours year to date. In fact, over the last two and a half years, we have reduced 47 million work hours for an estimated $2.4 billion in cost savings and nearly $1.3 billion in transportation cost savings while increasing our career workforce.

To address postal crime, we have completed a seven-city law enforcement surge as part of our Project Safe Delivery program. Overall, there have been more than 1,300 arrests for mail theft and robberies since May 2023. In fact, when compared to the same period last year, robbery-related arrests are up 72%, reported letter carrier robberies are down 21%, and mail theft complaints are down 32%.

Across the organization, there are many initiatives within every function, in every plant and every delivery unit that are producing results. In fact, since the release of the Delivering for America (DFA) plan we have accomplished many of the specified initiatives, but most importantly, we are the changing our mindset and culture, creating an organization that has passion for pursuing its initiatives to drive efficiency and reliability while competing for our financial survival as required by law.

Since the release of the DFA, we have reduced our projected operating losses by $15 billion, and if not for the excessive $9 billion of inflation incurred beyond our pricing power, we would be very close to breakeven. We have reduced our projected 10-year losses from nearly $160 billion to $65 billion and have strategies to reduce this further.

The DFA plan has changed this organization in so many positive ways, it represents the Postal Service's commitment as an independent agency to evolve our services to enable us to cover our costs by selling our products and services. This is what we must continue to do to survive – we must evolve – and that means change!

Unfortunately, to do that we cannot just focus on delivering mail tomorrow but must be focused on the long-term viability of the Postal Service. Well, the fact is the long-term viability of the Postal Service had been in doubt for over 14 years, prior to the issuance of the Delivering for America plan, and it still would be today without the changes we are pursuing.

During that 14-year period the Postal Service incurred losses of over $87 billion because of onerous legislation by Congress and a disregard for the economic reality of the Postal Service by the Postal Regulatory Commission. These actions, combined with ineffective management strategies, put the organization on a path to lose well over $160 billion over the next ten years, which the DFA plan seeks to correct for.

Think about this: That means the plan for the United States Postal Service, prior to the issuance of the DFA, was for the organization to lose over $250 billion over the course of 24 years. That was it, that was the plan – the Do-Nothing Plan or perhaps the Make-Believe It Wasn't Happening Plan.

There were no comprehensive initiatives from Congress, the Postal Regulatory Commission, the mailing industry, or Postal management for that matter, as to how to stem these losses. No strategies or guidance on how to reinvigorate this organization, so it could serve the public and survive far into the future. No willingness to relinquish the grip – or understand the impact of long failing institutional practices that were manifesting in front of them each day. Very little energy to be transparent to the public about the cumulative destruction inflicted on their constitutionally provided Postal Service as they screamed about the transferring of an operation, the failure of an operating practice or the steady decline in reliability.

Has anyone in Congress or the PRC ever

worked to stem $160 billion in projected organizational losses, while overcoming the devastating impact to an organization that nearly $100 billion in previous losses inflicts? The answer is no. How do I know? Because other than at the Postal Service, this situation has never existed.

I know what it's like. Our leadership team knows what it's like. Our carriers that drive 30-year-old vehicles know what is like. Our employees that work in dark dilapidated facilities know what it is like.

Prior to the Delivering for America plan, there was no path to financial self-sustainability or no growth strategy – no plan to repair the damage. Today, there is, and we are working hard to reduce our go-forward costs by approximately $5 billion, while growing our revenue by close to the same. We are working hard to build an operating and revenue model that delivers for the American people far into the future, and we are having success.

But along this hard journey, we are also experiencing failures. Why wouldn't we be given the magnitude of the transformation we are undertaking and the devastating trajectory we are trying to change?

However proud I am of the DFA plan, our leadership team and our employees that are working hard to implement our initiatives, I must remind our stakeholders that the DFA plan is not a magic wand. And that change, particularly on the scale that is needed, is hard, uncomfortable for everyone and encounters errors of varying magnitude.

We cannot snap our fingers and instantly implement our strategies that correct for years of failed practices while continuing to perform the substantial delivery operations we need to do each day without impacts. Similarly, the DFA plan is not a time machine. We cannot go back in time and undue the devastating conditions across the enterprise that exist because of years of Postal Service and stakeholder inaction.

The Delivering for America strategic plan embodies our ambition to modernize and transform the Postal Service. This massive and complex evolution includes correcting decades of haphazard decision making and neglect to our physical infrastructure and overall network.

Throughout this journey, we recognize that there have been impacts to our customers, especially in regions like Atlanta, Houston, and Richmond, where transformation activities have been elevated. We apologize for these conditions and are working hard and know that we will soon be delivering the service the American people deserve.

Those impacts are inherent to the massive change processes that we are undertaking. Those impacts are also the result of errors in execution that we aim to correct quickly. With that said, we have and will continue to work tirelessly to improve our service for our constituents and ask for your patience and understanding as we work to bring the Postal Service up to the standard we know it can reach within the time limits we have for survival.

Later, we will hear from Dr. Colin regarding the intensified efforts we are deploying in those areas of the country where we are failing to meet service expectations. Again, I apologize for the deteriorated performance and assure you that you will soon see improvement.

I would like to thank my leadership team for their persistent efforts to resolve executional missteps and for their quick response to adverse events we encounter along our journey. I am proud of their dedication and overall conduct.

I also would like to thank our Board of Governors for their continued support of the Delivering for America plan as well as their eagerness to comprehend the massive improvements we are endeavoring to achieve.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank the women and men of the United States Postal Service for their unwavering commitment to the nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman."

Source: USPS

Zalando reports â€œsubstantial improvementâ€□ i profitability in Q1

10-05-2024

German online retailer Zalando has reported a substantial improvement in profitability for the first quarter of 2024, with the firm delivering growth after winning more multi-channel fulfilment B2B partners over the first three months of the year and boosting the quality of its assortment.

For Q1 2024, Zalando reported adjusted EBIT of €28.3 million, in line with market expectations and representing a margin of 1.3%, compared to -€0.7 million in the prior year period. Meanwhile, GMV rose by 1.3% to €3.3 billion, and revenue was €2.2 billion compared with €2.3 billion in Q1 2023.

According to the firm, the substantial improvement in profitability was driven by lower fulfilment costs and successful inventory management, leading to an improved gross margin.

Net income improved from a loss of €38.5 million in Q1 2023 to a loss of €8.9 million in Q1 2024.

The ecosystem approach

The results are a validation of Zalando's updated strategy, announced in March, to build the leading pan-European fashion and lifestyle e-commerce ecosystem around its two main growth vectors: business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B).

The firm hopes that this ecosystem approach will help drive revenue growth of 0% to 5% in 2024, after a 1.9% drop to €10.1 billion last year. The company is aiming for a compound annual growth rate of 5-10% for both GMV and revenue over the next five years. In 2023, GMV decreased 1.1% to €14.6 billion.

Meanwhile, Zalando confirmed that it still expects adjusted EBIT to be between €380 million and €450 million in 2024 – up from €350 million in 2023, and €185 million in 2022. With both B2C and B2B, Zalando aims to cover in the long term the equivalent of 15% of the European fashion market, which is worth €450 billion.

"As we are executing our ecosystem strategy, we are excited by the positive response from customers and partners in the first quarter. We are returning to growth," said Dr Sandra Dembeck, Zalando CFO.

"B2C customers are showing increased interest in our quality assortment, digital tools, propositions and inspiring content. B2B customers are signing up for our unique offering. Both of our growth vectors are strong and contributing to results, demonstrating the strength of our plans," Dembeck added.

Source: CEP Research

Posten Bring delivers more parcels but harsh winter hits profits

10-05-2024

Posten Bring had a successful commercial start to 2024 with higher quarterly revenues and parcel volumes but the costs of a harsh winter weakened overall profits.

The Norwegian postal group increased turnover to NOK 5,971 million, an increase of NOK 44 million compared to last year's first quarter, in the January – March 2024 quarter.

However, a harsh winter has resulted in higher operating costs, turning last year's Q1 adjusted earnings profit of NOK 107 million into a loss of NOK 12 million, a reduction of NOK 119 million compared with the same period last year. Similarly, last year's reported operating profit (EBIT) of NOK 107 million slumped to a NOK 21 million loss.

Demanding conditions

"It is gratifying that we are still handling growing parcel volumes from e-commerce, but during the period there have also been demanding weather and driving conditions that have resulted in extra high costs," explained CEO Tone Wille.

"The profit development is characterised by challenging market conditions, with weak market developments and a higher cost level, as well as the fact that this year's Easter came in the first quarter and resulted in fewer working days compared with last year," she added.

But Wille stressed: "We have implemented a profitability program that will strengthen our competitiveness and provide room to invest for profitable growth going forward."

Source: CEP Research