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Feature story

Australia Post revamps parcels for growing e-commerce

Australia Post has announced a range of products and services for e-commerce traders and their customers.

The new measures augment existing parcel services following a 10.9% rise in volumes in the past financial year, attributed directly to growth in online shopping by Australia Post's chief executive, Ahmed Fahour.

Parcel receivers will have the option to choose where they want their parcel to be delivered. In Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, Australia Post is trialling electronic parcel lockers that offer round-the-clock access and email or SMS alerts when parcels are ready for pick-up.



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The company says Post Office Box holders will also have access to parcel lockers in 24 locations across the country by the end of November, with more planned.

Five retail outlets are trialling self-service machines for domestic parcels and more of these are also planned.

For e-retailers, Australia Post is upgrading 60 business hubs across the country focusing primarily on the needs of small to medium businesses. The first will open in November and 20 are planned by the end of 2012. During October and November, new e-retailer customers are being offered free pick-up by Australia Post's partner, Mailplus.

A flagship concept store will open in Brisbane in December providing a dedicated online shopping area, a 24/7 parcel pick-up zone and vending machines dispensing stamps and packaging. Australia Post and eBay are offering low flat-rate satchels and boxes for delivery anywhere in the country.

For international e-commerce, the company says its new parcel product, Pack and Track, provides a cheaper alternative to existing services. Initially the product offers tracked delivery to the United States but more international destinations will be added. Pack and Track is available online and at Australia Post's retail outlets.

Additional services for e-retailers include Australia Post's Click and Send online parcel despatch service offering label printing, postage payment and booking of a parcel pick-up. The company's SecurePay system can handle online ordering and payment and a new Shop In A Box product will be launched shortly.

The changes are being billed as the biggest ever made to Australia Post's parcels business. The company expects to develop more complementary services and new alternatives to home delivery. It claimed that 90% of residents in the area where it trialled an extended-hours, drive-through parcel collection service earlier this year said they wanted it to continue.

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US Postal Service to raise prices in January

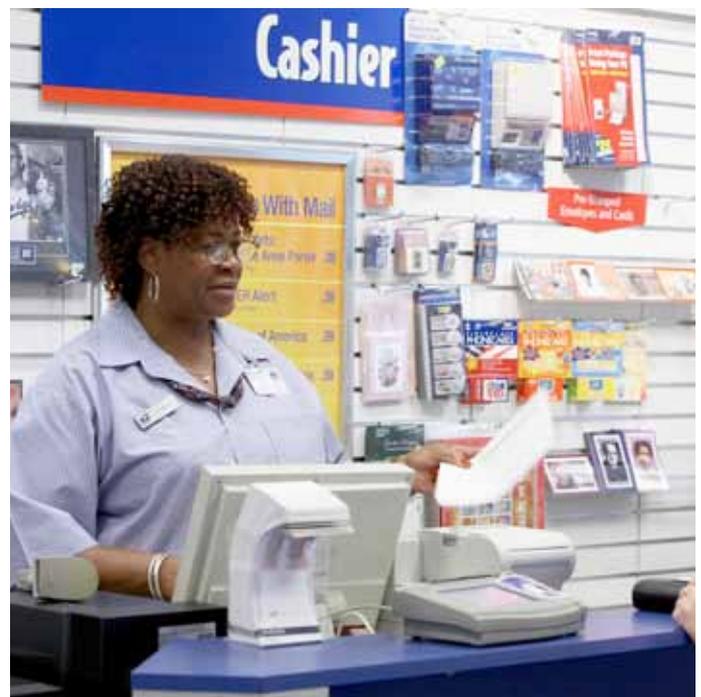
The United States Postal Service has announced new rates due to come into effect on 22 January 2012.

The price changes, filed with the Postal Regulatory Commission on 18 October, will increase the cost of a 1oz (28.35-gramme) First-Class letter by one US cent to US\$0.45. The price of each additional ounce will remain unchanged at US\$0.20.

The price of sending a postcard within the United States will rise by three cents to US\$0.32. For international mail, the price of a 1oz letter to Canada or Mexico will rise by five cents to US\$0.85 while letters to other international destinations will cost seven cents more at US\$1.05.

The overall average increase across all mailing services is capped by law at 2.1%, the inflation rate based on the Consumer Price Index. In addition to First-Class services, new rates will apply to Standard Mail, Periodicals, Package Services and Extra Services.

The Postal Service said it needed to increase prices in order to help address its financial crisis.



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UPS extends electronic customs clearance to more customers

UPS is extending electronic customs clearance to air freight customers and expanding the geographic range of its electronic shipment processing.

The UPS Paperless Invoice service now allows air freight customers, in addition to small package customers, to integrate their order processing, shipment preparation and commercial invoice data for transmission to customs authorities across the globe prior to shipment despatch.

The technology-enabled service eliminates the possibility of submitting incomplete paperwork and greatly reduces the chance of manual errors.

Initially, the service is available to air freight customers using UPS Internet Shipping and UPS CampusShip software and will be offered to UPS WorldShip users from January onwards.

The company is also extending its WorldShip shipment processing software to 25 additional origin countries across the world, bringing the total to 63 countries where small package and air freight shipments can be processed for shipment.

Free holiday mail and parcels for Canadian troops

Canada Post will again deliver holiday season letters and parcels free of charge to troops serving overseas in zones such as Afghanistan, Jerusalem, Kosovo, Sinai and Sudan.

The special benefit, now in its sixth year, is offered to the friends and families of the members of Canadian Forces deployed on land or ships. Canada Post will accept parcels free of charge from now until 13 January 2012.

2011 marks the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Forces Postal Service.



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UPS names new global public affairs chief

UPS has appointed Laura Lane to lead its public affairs office and oversee its government relations activities around the world.

Most recently, Ms Lane was managing director and head of international government affairs for Citicorp. She was previously vice president for global public policy at Time Warner and prior to that served in the United States Foreign Service.

She succeeds Arnie Wellman, who has headed UPS's worldwide public affairs operation since 1992 and who has been with the company for 38 years. The transition to Ms Lane will be completed in February 2012.

UPS employees get behind Global Volunteer Month

October is Global Volunteer Month across the globe for UPS' 400,000 employees who donate an average of 80 hours a year to volunteering, according to an internal company survey.

Now in its ninth year, Global Volunteer Month encourages employees to make a difference in their communities by taking part in activities ranging from educating children to providing vital necessities to people in need. The UPS Foundation runs an internal competition, providing grants of US\$10,000 to the ten winning employees for the organisations they support.

>>In Brief - Americas

Donahoe marks 10th anniversary of anthrax attacks

United States Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe paid tribute to the unwavering dedication and commitment of postal employees on 18 October, the 10th anniversary of the mail's deliberate contamination by anthrax, which caused the death of five people, including two postal employees.

Canada Post gets consumers thinking about holiday season mail

Canada Post has reminded its customers of the latest posting dates to send parcels and cards to family and friends abroad at Christmas, as well as posting dates for domestic mail. Last year Canada Post delivered more than 1bn cards and packages during the holiday season.

Asia-Pacific



Community groups in New Zealand can post for free

New Zealand Post is giving away more than 1.1m postage-paid envelopes to non-profit community organisations and programmes this year as part of its Community Post scheme.

Around 4,000 community groups across the country will benefit from free postage following approval of their applications by 16 regional boards. New Zealand Post left the final decision to the regional boards but asked them to give priority to projects aligned with its sponsorship priorities.

The company supports initiatives that encourage literacy and education, health and wellbeing, and those which involve businesses in working together to the benefit of communities.

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Deutsche Post's E-Postbrief gains Trusted Site Privacy status

Deutsche Post's secure electronic letter, E-Postbrief, has gained 'Trusted Site Privacy' status following an audit by external certification body, TÜV Informationstechnik GmbH (TÜViT).

E-Postbrief passed all the legal and technical aspects of the audit, which covered processing reliability, user and customer friendliness, transparency, data protection, quality management, data security and legal conformity.

TÜViT's managing director, Antonius Sommer, said E-Postbrief's Trusted Site Privacy status demonstrated the product's use of high security and data protection standards that consumers could trust. The certificate lasts until July 2013 but TÜViT will also conduct an annual review.

The audit covered the purely electronic service and not the hybrid service (physical delivery of electronic messages) or value-added services.

Last year TÜViT conducted an audit of the management system for information security used by Deutsche Post for E-Postbrief. That audit resulted in the award of ISO 27001 certification by the German Office for Information Security.

TNT Express revises 2011 financial aims

TNT Express issued a business update on 06 October revising its financial aims for the current year prior to publication of its third quarter results, due on 31 October.

The company expected "muted" growth in Europe, the Middle East and Africa with an underlying operating margin of 8% to 9%. It said trading was relatively resilient in the third quarter with cost control and efficiency gains helping to offset revenue pressure.

In Asia Pacific the second half of the year is expected to continue the first half trend when an improved product mix in China was offset by increases in general costs and wages. In the region as a whole, weak demand led to a soft pricing environment and sub-optimal use of capacity. The aim for the rest of the year is to optimise exposure to inter-continental capacity.



In the Americas the company will continue to address negative performance. In Brazil revenue in the third quarter was not sufficient to make up for the previous loss of major customers, although the company said operational quality continued to improve. TNT Express said it had made progress towards its deadline for turning round its Brazilian operations during the second half of 2012; it will conduct a value assessment in the fourth quarter of this year.

The company has completed the first phase of its indirect and overhead cost reduction programme, targeting annualised cost savings of about €50m. For the rest of this year TNT Express will support its cash flow through tight management of capital expenditure and working capital.

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DHL's Innovation Campus brings partners on site

Deutsche Post DHL is building a shared innovation campus in Germany in order to expand and optimise partnerships dedicated to developing logistics solutions for the future.

The company has begun construction of a new building near Bonn at Troisdorf where its DHL Innovation Centre is already housed. The two buildings on a single site will form an innovation campus where external partners and subsidiaries will undertake research jointly with the DHL Solutions & Innovations (DSI) division.

From next spring the new building next to the Innovation Centre will come into operation housing some 80 employees from DSI and Deutsche Post DHL's subsidiary, Agheera, a company specialising in real-time shipment tracking. These employees will be joined initially by 20 employees from partner companies Motorola Solutions, 7id, Infoware, Mojix, Zetes and the Fraunhofer-Institut für Fabrikbetrieb und-automatisierung (IFF).

DSI believes the campus will grow quickly and plans a second construction phase to add further space. Its vice president Steffen Frankenberg said the ability to have DSI staff and partners under one roof would facilitate cooperation in an "inspirational" working environment.

Swiss Post opens combined postal and financial outlet

Swiss Post has opened its first retail outlet providing both post office and PostFinance services.

It has remodelled its main post office in Horgen at a cost of CHF4m to offer its full range of postal and financial services, plus branded retail products and PO Box facilities. The new layout incorporates six postal counters, a counter providing information on PostFinance products and private rooms for face-to-face financial consultations.

In spring 2012 joint postal-financial outlets will open in Martigny and Köniz. If these and the Horgen outlet prove successful Swiss Post will look at rolling out more based on the same model.

The other two post offices in Horgen are being replaced by postal agencies operated with partner retailers providing longer opening hours.

Swiss Post currently has more than 3,600 customer access points, including 1,873 post offices, 411 postal agencies, 1,221 home services, 99 PickPost automated service points and four in-house mail services.



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PostNL sells its stake in Italy's Telepost

PostNL of the Netherlands has continued its rationalisation process with an agreement to sell its 51% share in Italian mailroom services company Telepost S.p.A to fellow shareholder Manutencoop Facility Management S.p.A.

The sale is the last of several transactions in the past year-and-a-half to divest the company of non-core activities. PostNL will now concentrate its international activities fully on addressed mail services in Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, where it already has strong market positions.

German consumers give top rating to mail service

The satisfaction scores from private postal customers in Germany reached their highest level for 10 years between April and July this year, according to the Kundenmonitor 2011 survey.

The long term study, published annually by German research institute Forschungsinstitut ServiceBarometer, found that 95% of private customers are either satisfied or very satisfied with Deutsche Post's mail and retail outlet service.

Customers were especially positive about short mail delivery times and accessibility to mailboxes and retail outlets. They appreciated the delivery service, awarding top ratings to mail carriers' friendliness, dedication and accuracy in letter delivery.



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