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## Going postal: Creative marketing can make the USPS profitable

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If you think old-fashioned mail delivery is being replaced by email and texting, think again. The U.S. Postal Service delivered 155 billion pieces of mail in 2014 - down 3 billion from 2013. The decrease was in the first-class and standard mail categories. (Why pay 50 cents to pay a bill when you can do it free online?) Shipping and packaging grew by 300 million pieces (+8%).

The USPS 2014 loss was \$5.5 billion compared to \$5 billion in 2013. Almost that entire amount is related to a mandated \$5.7 billion contribution to the retiree health care benefits fund and workers comp - not mail operations. Changing legislation would make the Postal Service close to break-even. Then they could implement some truly creative ideas to make the USPS profitable for the first time since 2006.

We've touched on this subject before, but here are some new ideas that you can send to your Congressman:

- \* Add more mini post offices in office supply and other stores such as Staples and Walmart are doing.
- \* Continue streamlining - USPS has cut its workforce and closed plants. They could save \$750 million annually from planned cuts. They saved \$865 million by closing 141 processing facilities in 2012-13.
- \* Eliminate Saturday delivery - Savings: \$2 billion per year. Bills, coupons and magazines can wait until Monday.
- \* Allow paid advertising on USPS trucks - Ads on 200,000 vehicles could rake in \$1 billion per year.
- \* Sell ads on the back of stamps and on the little folders stamps come in - 20 billion stamps are sold each year. Sell that tiny ad space for, say, \$5 million per billion stamps. That would net \$100 million.
- \* Promote stamp collecting - Ramp up the idea of philately: Many nostalgic icon stamps like Batman, Harry Potter are put in albums, never used - all profit. Don't just give away the space: Make the brands pay for the advertising on all those stamps. Could reap \$10 million per year.

All of which brings me to my point: There are many creative ways and places to get your company or product noticed. The right creative person can develop the right message and find the right vehicles (pun intended). Even for the Postal Service.

Stanley Hurwitz is principal of Stanley Hurwitz/Creative Communications, Stoughton, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540