

# MBC today

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Volume 21 Issue 6 | November/December 2019

*The voice of the mail and business center industry since 1982*

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# MBC today

A Publication of

## Association of Mail & Business Centers (AMBC)

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### AMBC Mission:

As a member-run non-profit trade association, our mission is to provide a #MembersHelpingMembers community for businesses in the shipping, mail, and business center industry to connect, learn, and grow.

Building on decades of experience, we believe in always reaching for what's new and what's next, and strive to grow fresh content, programs, and trusted supplier connections that benefit our members ... and inspire them to reach their full potential.

Our industry is ever evolving, and we are here to keep you current, viable, and accessible so you grow and thrive in your communities, and in our unique industry. Join us!

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**Questions?**

Please contact us at:

[hello@ambc4me.org](mailto:hello@ambc4me.org)

or call 815-316-8255





# Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Welcome to another year-end edition of *MBC Today*. We hope this issue inspires you to finish this year in a positive way, taking steps to guide your business to a very bright 2020.

In this issue, we've done something I've been wanting to do for quite a while: We've brought back Shrimps! While newer readers may have never experienced Shrimps before, those of us who have been around this industry for a few decades would remember Shrimps from the old *News & Ideas* newsletter that Charmaine Fennie championed. They're simply little sentence-or-two quotes, lessons, ideas, suggestions, or stories intended to inspire, motivate, and educate.

Charmaine was known for having Shrimps printed on little pieces of paper and would hand them out to people she chatted with at events. I can still picture her coming up to my parents and me at an event—sometime in the 90s or early 2000s—and slipping my mom a little piece of paper with a Shrimp on it. It was kind of like the fortune from a fortune cookie, but the content was relevant and motivating. We hope that bringing back Shrimps will honor Charmaine's legacy.

You'll find Shrimps scattered throughout the magazine, and I do hope you'll send submissions in with your own ideas for future Shrimps. And, just to be clear, this editor does indeed know that the plural of "shrimp," in most contexts, is still "shrimp," but we're going to be calling them "Shrimps." Why? Because, frankly, I think it's cute.

In this issue, we've also added a throwback column: *Lessons from the Archives*. In this section, we'll bring back an article, clip, or mention from a past issue of *MBC Today*. We hope this inspires you to take advantage of all the information in the *MBC Today* archives, always available to AMBC Members in the Members Only section of [ambc4me.org](http://ambc4me.org).

As always, we'd love more voices in *MBC Today*. Do you have a story to share? An idea to explore? A funny line for MBC Funnies? A Shrimp? Please send your submissions to [marty@ambc4me.org](mailto:marty@ambc4me.org). Your submissions don't have to be eloquent or polished. Just send the idea or a rough draft and together we can make it ready for publication.

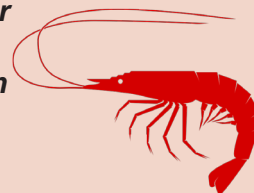
Thank you, as always, for reading. And thank you for making AMBC the truly valuable #MembersHelpingMembers organization that it is. Here's to an extraordinary 2020!

With care,



Marty Johnson  
Editor, *MBC Today*

***"Shrimps" are little gems of helpful, inspirational, or thought-provoking information. Please send your Shrimps to [marty@ambc4me.org](mailto:marty@ambc4me.org) for consideration in a future issue.***



The world-renowned department store, Nordstrom, is famous for handing out an employee handbook with just one rule:

Rule #1: Use best judgment in all situations. There will be no additional rules.

While, of course, Nordstrom also has an over-7000-word policy guide to communicate all best practices and legal stuff, their infamous employee handbook is designed to empower the Nordstrom team to be the best they can be. And it works.

# News from Headquarters



Dear Fellow AMBC Members,

AMBC's The Event in Phoenix in the beginning of November was something we were planning for the entire year. Our goal at this event was to make sure our AMBC Members were not only trained in some of the most basic, imperative elements of running a business in our industry like mailbox rental, packing, and shipping, but also inspired and encouraged to grow their businesses further through expanded print and retail options, as well as other new and growing profit centers that are making big differences for some of our members. Throughout the weekend, we reinforced our core message: value relationships over transactions, treat guests with respect and fairness, and be your authentic selves both online and offline to grow your business in a way that 21st century clients will respond to.

For all of you who attended, we hope this weekend inspired, uplifted, and rejuvenated both you and your business so that you left with new growth, ready to make the next chapter an excellent one! Check out Marty's article on this event, detailing all the fun and important aspects.

For those that were unable to make it to Phoenix, be sure to mark your calendars for AMBC's 2020 event where we'll be back in Saint Louis, April 16th-19th. To celebrate 2020, we'll be focusing the event's theme on vision and doing our best to share ideas, strategies, and building blocks to unlock a bright future for our members. It's sure to be momentous, epic, and full of new takeaway ideas to revitalize and rejuvenate your businesses. A detailed schedule, sign-up form, and pricing can be found on [ambc4me.org](http://ambc4me.org).

Finally, please take advantage of the valuable resource in your hands. Make sure to read this issue of *MBC Today* from cover to cover, exploring of all the valuable nuggets of information contained inside. Then, apply all that knowledge to your stores, so that you can grow your business. Your AMBC membership includes access to all past issues of *MBC Today*, which contain relevant industry information to help guide you through today's challenging business climate. Be sure to download these issues at [ambc4me.org](http://ambc4me.org).

The rest of the AMBC team and I are here for you. The AMBC Board of Directors is made up of volunteers—AMBC Members just like you, elected by our peers to guide our non-profit organization to best serve our members and our industry. Please let us know what we can do to better serve you!

With gratitude and effervescence, on behalf of the entire AMBC team,

Fahim Mojawalla  
Board Chair and Director of Social Media, AMBC  
Co-Owner, Island Ship Center  
#iamAMBC #MembersHelpingMembers #AMBC4ME  
Direct email: [Fahim@ambc4me.org](mailto:Fahim@ambc4me.org)

Suggested read:

*The Energy Bus* by Jon Gordon



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## FEDEX - UPS REFUNDS & REPORTS



# What's Going on in the Industry...

## AMBC4ME Online User Forum Has Moved

One of AMBC's most popular member benefits is our AMBC4ME online question and answer forum, and now that forum is hosted directly on [ambc4me.org](http://ambc4me.org)!

We've been working on migrating the forum to our own site for a long time now, knowing that Yahoo Groups, where it was hosted for many years, wasn't long for the world. And, just when we had the new forum ready to go, Yahoo Groups announced: "Starting December 14, 2019 Yahoo Groups will no longer host user created content on its sites." So, the timing couldn't be more perfect.

Please start using the new AMBC4ME forum today. Any conversations previously created on the Yahoo Group may be continued on the new forum. Here are step-by-step instructions for the new forum:

1. Go to [ambc4me.org](http://ambc4me.org). In the top menu, go to the "Member Forums" page from the "Members Only" drop-down menu. There you will see a chatroom called, "AMBC Members Forum." Click on that.

2. You will be prompted to sign in to view, post, and comment in the forum. To sign in, simply use the email and password you already have on file with your AMBC account.

3. After signing in, you will automatically be redirected to the forum where you can read, comment, or post your own topic/posts.

After signing in, you will automatically be sent to the forum home page. On this page, you can scroll through and see all the different "Topics" (the main subject or discussion). Each Topic contains "Posts" that members can write to further the discussion of a Topic.

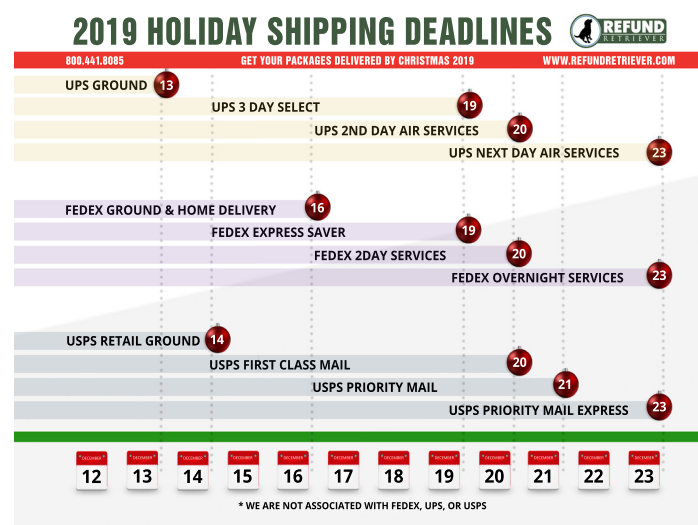
To create a new Topic, scroll to the bottom of the forum home page. There you can type your "Topic Title" and add any description or supporting text in the box below if you would like. "Topic Tags" are optional and can be any word or multi-word phrases related to your post, each separated by a comma. Leave the settings for "Topic Type" and "Topic Status" as "Normal" and "Open," respectively. The checkbox at the bottom is optional and can be selected to set your preference for if you want to receive email notifications any time an AMBC Member posts to your Topic. Lastly, hit "Submit" and your Topic will be added to the Members Forum.

To read and write posts, click on the Topic title you wish to view. At the bottom of the Posts page, you can write and submit your own Post. "Post Tags" are optional and can be any word or multi-word phrases related to your post, each separated by a comma. You can also hit "Reply" on another AMBC Member's post to write a comment.

Always remember, your mentors are just a click away! If you have any trouble, please email [hello@ambc4me.org](mailto:hello@ambc4me.org).

## 2019 Holiday Shipping Deadlines

In addition to the deadlines AMBC is sharing on a spread in this issue, Refund Retriever has created a fantastic holiday shipping deadlines calendar. You can download the calendar to print and post in your store and check out a lot of other great information Refund Retriever has shared at <https://www.refundretriever.com/blog/FedEx-Holiday-Shipping-Deadlines>



## FASC Peak Preparation Checklist

FedEx has shared an excellent checklist for FASCs (FedEx Authorized ShipCenters) to prepare for the peak holiday shipping season. Check it out at [https://www.fedex.com/content/dam/fedex/us-united-states/services/FASC\\_PeakChecklist.pdf](https://www.fedex.com/content/dam/fedex/us-united-states/services/FASC_PeakChecklist.pdf)

## 2020 USPS Rate Increase

Proposed 2020 USPS rates have been announced. They still have to go before the Postal Regulatory Commission, but all being well there the new rates are planned to go into effect on January 26, 2020.



Rates for postcards, envelopes, and letters are planned to remain the same as 2019 rates, however rates on packages are expected to increase between 2 and 3%.

## **Nominations for 2020 AMBC Board of Directors**

AMBC is now accepting nominations for our 2020 board of directors. Do you know an outstanding AMBC Member who you'd like to nominate? Or, would you be willing to step up to board service yourself and want to find someone to nominate you? Let us know! We hope to have an election in the near future to fill a seat or two on the 2020 board.

AMBC's board is comprised of volunteers—AMBC Members just like you, nominated and elected by their peers to guide our member-run non-profit organization. It's because of you and for you that these individuals put in their time and energy, and we are incredibly grateful for each one's service.

Please email [hello@ambc4me.org](mailto:hello@ambc4me.org) with your nominations.

## **AMBC's The Event Documents and Presentations**

As promised, we have posted the presentations from AMBC's The Event in Phoenix in early November, along with a plethora of related documents, in the Members Only section on [ambc4me.org](http://ambc4me.org).

There's a trove of resources in the Members Only section, including newly-posted sample employment application, sample employment agreement, sample semi-annual review form, sample terms and conditions disclosure, and much more. These sample resources are for you to use as templates—springboards to customize forms and policies that are appropriate for your business and in your municipalities.

Even if unable to attend The Event, AMBC Members in good standing should be able to log in and access these resources. Having trouble logging in? Please email [hello@ambc4me.org](mailto:hello@ambc4me.org) to find out why.

## **AMBC's 2020 Event Announced**

Mark your calendars!

As a result of very valuable feedback we've received, AMBC will be having just one event in 2020: the *2020 Visionary Summit* in St. Louis, April 16-19.

Yes, we'll be back in St. Louis! This central, easy-to-get-to location proved very successful for our AMBC's 2019

Basic Training event, and we're thrilled to be pairing up again with The Mailbox Stores to come back to St. Louis in 2020.

We're combining both basic training (AMBC certified classes) and workshop material (hands-on sessions and other seminars on topics from social media to printing to outside the box marketing and more). Is there something you'd like to see covered, or a topic we can research to present more information on? Is there a vendor you'd love to see there? Let us know!

Some other things you can look forward to at the 2020 Visionary Summit include a FedEx operations tour, a tour of the Anheuser-Busch facility, tours of The Mailbox Stores and their brand new state-of-the-art mega print facility, a keynote address from Bob Ramsey, a vendor showcase, software training, special activities for managers and employees only, and a uniform extravaganza (so bring your favorite store uniforms and prepare to strut your stuff on the runway!)

2020 is the year of the visionary—a year to get focused, see clearer, and move forward—and we're looking forward to seeing you in April at the 2020 Visionary Summit St. Louis!

## **Sign Up for Cayan CC Processing and Get \$100 Toward AMBC Renewal**

Cayan, formerly known as Merchant Warehouse, offers our members tremendous rates on processing. AMBC will put \$100 toward AMBC membership renewal. Yes, that's a \$100 incentive just for trying Cayan! The Genius terminal scans the credit card and determines the best interchange rate for your store for each individual credit card. Store owners with the Cayan and Genius terminals are already reporting tremendous savings on their credit card processing rates.

The best part is that it is a risk free offer. They are so sure you will love it that there is no minimum contract time, you can cancel at any time. They have live tech support to help walk you through the transition. The new Apple Pay interface on the Genius terminal is a real winner for smart phone users, and these terminals are in compliance with the new technology required in October when the smart chips become a full time reality. Are you prepared? Call us today and we'll help you start saving money right away!

# 2019 Holiday Shipping Deadlines



***AMBC recommends that you encourage your clients to ship by these dates for the best chance of getting their domestic, contiguous state shipments delivered by Christmas.***

Please note that guarantees and time commitments may be suspended or extended during peak shipping season. Always check directly with the carrier before committing to guaranteed delivery times with your clients. And don't forget check the weather forecast, as a winter storm anywhere along the shipment's path may also cause non-refundable delays.

## **FedEx®**

**Monday, December 9** – FedEx SmartPost®

**Monday, December 16** – FedEx Home Delivery® and FedEx Ground®

**Thursday, December 19** – FedEx Express Saver®

**Friday, December 20** – FedEx 2Day® and FedEx 2Day® A.M.

**Monday, December 23** – FedEx First Overnight®, FedEx Priority Overnight®, and FedEx Standard Overnight®

More information at <http://www.fedex.com/us/holiday/last-days-to-ship.html>

## **UPS®**

**Friday, December 13** – UPS® Ground

**Thursday, December 19** – UPS 3 Day Select®

**Friday, December 20** – UPS 2nd Day Air®

**Monday, December 23** – UPS Next Day Air®

More information at <https://www.ups.com/us/en/help-center/shipping-support/days-of-operation-us/holiday-shipping-us.page>

## **USPS**

**Saturday, December 14** – USPS Retail Ground®

**Friday, December 20** – First-Class Mail® Service

**Saturday, December 21** – Priority Mail® Service

**Monday, December 23** – Priority Mail Express® Service

More information at <https://www.usps.com/holiday/holiday-shipping-dates.htm>

Please also check out Refund Retriever's great blog post about holiday shipping deadlines, including a great calendar: <https://www.refundretriever.com/blog/FedEx-Holiday-Shipping-Deadlines>



# MPC Shipping Insurance

from **Shipsurance**

## Full Coverage for Your Shipments... and Your Profits!

Shipsurance offers shipping insurance coverage for your Mail & Parcel Center. Make sure that the parcels that pass through your store are 100% covered for loss or damage while adding to your bottom line. Trust Shipsurance as your outsourced claims management department.

### Shipsurance Customers Receive:

- Low Cost, All-Risk Shipping Insurance Coverage.
- Cover the Full Value of Your Shipments PLUS Your Retail Pack and Ship Charges = COVER YOUR PROFIT!
- Proving Carrier Negligence is NOT Required.
- No Co-Insurance Penalties.
- Coverage for Drop-offs is Included.
- Rapid, Online Claims Processing That is Not Dependent on Carrier Approval.
- Friendly, Knowledgeable Staff.
- Coverage is underwritten by U.S. based Voyager Indemnity Insurance Company.

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It's the calm before the storm — at least that's what it might look from the outside of your pack-and-ship store. Inside, you've most likely been preparing over the last several weeks for the upcoming holiday rush.

To give you some insight into what veteran store owners are doing to get ready, we talked with two of your FedEx Authorized ShipCenter® (FASC) peers, Norman Froscher and Steve Dick. Here's what they had to say about managing successful businesses during the holidays and using peak as an opportunity to convert drop-in customers into loyal patrons.

## Tips From Two Peers on Preholiday Planning

### The Start of Peak Season

**Norm:** I'll ramp it up into high gear the end of September and beginning of October. We do a lot more retail now, so plans are already in place for what products we're going to try for the new year. For the shipping aspect of it, we try to have everything ready by the end of October/first week of November. Thanksgiving weekend is when peak really kicks off.

**Steve:** I start preparing for peak around October. I'm a little bit different than a lot of pack-and-ship stores because my volume of printing and the other things that I do keep me pretty even-keeled throughout the entire year. So I don't have as much of a volume bump in December compared to most stores. Last year, we really didn't start picking up until about the first of December.

### Inventory and Supplies

**Norm:** I take a look at the numbers from the previous years. Right now, we're up 20% over last year, so I'm going to look at the packing supplies, the boxes and the inventory levels. I'll make sure that we have 20–25% higher volume for the shipping supplies than what we did last year.

**Steve:** The biggest thing for me is to make final decisions on my marketing for the holiday season and start getting in extra boxes to build up my supply. I look at the trends, see what volume of boxes sold over November, December and January of the previous years. I use that plus a percentage.

### Preholiday Marketing

**Norm:** We do Every Door Direct Mail to a lot of the residents in the area. We've done sign holders — holding a sign out — and sign spinners. Yes, with a real person. During the holiday season, we'll pull some of the FedEx marketing materials off of the web. We're very active on social media: We do Facebook and Instagram ads, as well. You've got to engage them on social media. I can tell you, we've gained customers from it.

**Steve:** I have in-store flyers. I also work with a couple of businesses to do cross-promotion. I always do a big

EDDM [Every Door Direct Mail] or postcard mailing. I include the last days to ship on flyers, though sometimes I include that in print advertising in the newspaper — as a calendar, it draws people's attention. I use Facebook and Instagram for short in-store specials and general top-of-mind awareness. We use Constant Contact to drive traffic to our website and for more detailed promotions.

### Decorations

**Norm:** We don't start to decorate until after Thanksgiving. We try to keep it tasteful — a little bit of Hanukkah, a little bit of Christmas. We're South Florida, so we have a lighted palm tree with some ornaments, and we have a menorah and a stocking up by the front register and back counter. Especially the two weeks before Christmas, we play Christmas music.

**Steve:** Generally, we decorate the store the day after Thanksgiving. Just all sorts of stuff hanging from the ceiling and lights in the windows. We rearrange a lot. Around the first week of November, we put all of our Christmas cards out. We use satellite radio and alternate between two or three Christmas radio stations during the holiday season.

### Customer Refreshments

**Norm:** I bought a truckload, a pallet-full of water with my logo branded on it. When customers come in, we offer them a bottle of water, a muffin, a cookie.

**Steve:** We always have candy dishes out year-round just because I think candy makes an unhappy person less unhappy and makes a happier person happier.

### Customer Conversion

**Norm:** The holiday season is that one shot you have with the new people coming into the store. It's that one time of the year, more than any other time, for them to discover who we are and what we do — and for us to earn their confidence. That gives us one chance to greet them, ask them if they want a cup of coffee, ask them if they want a bottle of water. We have a pretty good conversion rate.



**Steve:** Peak is when we get the most new visitors to our store — and people coming back with returns. Those are the times to convert those customers to year-round customers in any way you can. Make sure that they know all of your services. Make sure they have a reason to come back — some sort of a discount, some sort of an offer.

### Coupons and Discounts

**Norm:** We'll do a mailing to a lot of the residents in the area with a couple of coupons. And we have a couple of coupons on our website. If they pay for the shipping, they get a free box. It's basically to get people into the door who might not otherwise come in. We tried a rewards program, but on the shipping end of it, it was just cannibalizing. We were giving them additional discounts when they were already coming in.

**Steve:** I do EDDM or postcard mailings with printing and shipping discounts for the holiday season. I try to have at least three or four offers on there. Normally, I do a simple \$2 off FedEx Ground, \$5 off of FedEx Express — and I do a free box with any paid package. A free box is going to be 5% to 7% of your total transaction cost, so it's less than if I offered a 10% discount on a shipment.

But customers like the word "free." For me, it's an ability to push them into a FedEx Express® versus a FedEx Ground® shipment. I've always had a large volume of FedEx Ground.

### Team Nourishment

**Norm:** I have two part-time employees right now and myself. I may look at adding a part-time person this year. We're a combo pack-and-ship store and coffee shop — we keep ourselves and our customers happily caffeinated.

**Steve:** I've got five full-time employees. We stock water and coffees and tea, and we always have snacks of some sort. We do meals on a regular basis. Especially during the busiest shipping week, we'll have food catered in two or three of those days.

### Holiday Busyness

**Norm:** I enjoy being busy. I enjoy having a whole bunch of people in the store and trying to manage taking care of them all.

**Steve:** A lot of my volume is the older folks. We cater to everybody, but there's a bump in the older folks because they like our service — they like the fact that it's hassle-free.



We offer LTL Freight Shipping with 50+ carriers. We have used our 20 years experience in the shipping and packaging industry and the volume of our always growing customer base, to negotiate very competitive LTL rates with the top 50 national, regional and local freight companies. As a trusted supplier for the AMBC, we can now pass our volume discounts on to you. Our online portal allows our customers to access: rates, booking, tracking and payment options, 24/7. For more info or a rate quote, email [ltl@gologic.com](mailto:ltl@gologic.com) or call Chad @419-666-6721 x207



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# #iamAMBC AMBC Member Spotlight

In each issue of *MBC Today*, we feature two outstanding AMBC Members so our other members can get to know them better. If you know an AMBC Member who would be deserving of this feature, please let us know.

**AMBC Member name:**

Kristina Culberston

**AMBC Member business:**

Post-Haste Mail Center Inc  
600 F Street, Suite 3, Arcata, CA 95521  
1 (707) 825-8295  
[store@posthastemail.com](mailto:store@posthastemail.com)

**How long have you been involved with this industry?**  
12 years

**How long have you been a member of AMBC?**  
11 years

**Tell us a little bit about your team.**

We have a staff of five, plus a bookkeeper. One team member has been with me for 10 years and is my manager. Others range in time with me from seven years to as recent as six months.

My staff is invaluable. I could not run my busy store without them and I am fortunate enough to be able to go away regularly. They bring new perspective and ideas and they have skills I don't have.

**Tell us a little bit about your community.**

Arcata is a college town with a population of around 18,000; Eureka, to the south about five miles, has a population of about 26,000; and McKinleyville, to the north about five miles, has a population of 15,000. Humboldt County has a population of about 130,000 total with much of it rural and many people using Arcata as their main town for services.

Humboldt has been sustained on its largest cash crop of cannabis for approximately 60 years when hippies from the San Francisco Bay area came to Humboldt as "back to the landers." We have had some interesting changes to our economy as this crop has gained legal status. Many people, for many years, have used the crop for supplementing their income in addition to holding down a regular job.

The community is a split between very politically progressive and very politically conservative. Arcata is more progressive and considered a "hippie" enclave. The other parts of the county are split politically and economically between the back to the land cannabis growers, and the somewhat conservative loggers and fisherman who have had to adapt to a changing economy as those industries have died off. Many people are "do it yourself" folks and have a variety of skills.

Many people here are small business owners themselves. It is an incubator for small food product producers who have gone on to be featured in places like Whole Foods. We have a huge number of coffee roasters, breweries, and specialty foods producers making



things like gluten free products. We also have a very large population of artists in many fields including

photography, fine arts like painting and ceramics, and a surprising number of high-end luthiers who make products for such well known acts as Metallica (I've sent 12 guitars to Metallica in the last few years).

This summer, the only other FedEx location (FedEx Office) closed. Most people in Arcata prefer not to drive the five miles to the next town to conduct business, so they are willing to pay a slightly higher price to avoid the extra travel.

**What products / services do you offer?**

Professional packing with a specialty in framed artwork; packing supplies; FedEx and USPS, both as an Authorized or Approved Shipper; mailboxes and package receiving; greeting cards; passport photos; Live Scan fingerprinting; notary public; fax; copy; scan; printing services, including document production such as booklet making, comb and coil binding, lamination; rubber stamps; freight and palletizing

**What are your plans for the future?**

We have a large format printer being delivered any day now. We expect to see a huge growth in sales with this as we have many people coming in the door asking for blueprints and other large format so they don't have to drive to Eureka.

My social media presence is sorely lacking, this is an area I plan on working on this year.

And, of course, I plan to see more concerts next year. This year I travelled seven times and saw 17 concerts.

**How has being an AMBC Member helped your business?**

AMBC has been instrumental in making me profitable. In my first year in business, I realized I needed experienced mentors if I was going to survive. I found those mentors at AMBC conventions. I also made life-long friends who I know I can count on in times of need. Whether it be a small question or whether I need to show up with a U-Haul full of stuff and use their store to get a freight job done when I'm on the other side of the country (did this recently, huge thanks to Jeff Ballantyne).

I would not be where I am today without the people and experiences I have had by being a member of AMBC.

**Where to follow:** [www.posthastemail.com](http://www.posthastemail.com)



**AMBC Member name:**



Jack Cromer, *Box Ninja*



**AMBC Member business:**

Copy Pack and Mail  
433 Sam Ridley Parkway West  
Smyrna, TN 37167  
1 (615) 220-1000  
[sales@copypackandmail.com](mailto:sales@copypackandmail.com)



**How long have you been involved with this industry?**

15 years (2004)

**How long have you been a member of AMBC?**

15 years (2004)

**Tell us a little bit about your team.**

Tricia and Dee are our customer service reps who care for our customers' needs from shipping and mailing to printing and listening. We believe listening is a lost service in a lot of businesses. We do our best to treat our customers just like we like to be treated.

**Tell us a little bit about your community.**

The Town of Smyrna, TN is just southeast of Nashville. It's mostly a blue-collar town with Nissan as the main employer. Popular recreation includes fishing, hunting, camping, and air shows, including the Blue Angels this past summer.

Our town's population is just under 54,000. Copy Pack and Mail has been serving Smyrna and the surrounding area since 1996.

**What products / services do you offer?**

We offer shipping through FedEx, UPS, and USPS, packing, full service and self service copies, mailbox rental, notary service, bindery services, secure document shredding, and greeting cards. We also offer several types of printing (printing experience since 1977).

**What are your plans for the future?**

Future plans include teaming with a local beekeeper and selling honey. I'm also considering passport and fingerprinting services.

**How has being an AMBC Member helped your business?**

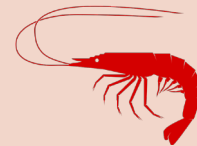
I have found AMBC a very valuable asset to use. When I call, Kim has been very helpful.

Finding tools and vendors on the AMBC website is a handy feature. Talking with fellow owners at events has helped make changes in our business much easier.

**Where to follow:**

[www.copypackandmail.com](http://www.copypackandmail.com)

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Studies consistently show that breakfast eaters have overall better performance, memory, and attention than breakfast skippers. Just like with exercise, if you make room in your schedule for breakfast, you'll make up that time many times over in productivity. And you'll look and feel better too!



**Selling Your Business?**

Steve Merrick  
of the  
SRM Spirit Group  
offers three  
options to assist:



**#1 | How to Sell Your Mail Parcel Business -\$49**  
by James Baer

This 80-page booklet discusses details and provides sample documents for the preparations, marketing, discovery period, sales agreement, closing, and the buyer's training.

**#2 | Live GoToMeeting Session -\$250**

A focused strategy discussion will include the preps for your Selling Toolbox, marketing, and identifying potential buyers. It will also include a customized sale price for your store. This private and confidential session invites anyone you would like to attend, i.e. partner, manager, business attorney, accountant, etc.

**#3 | 6-Month Coaching Engagement to Prepare Your Store For a Sale -\$1,750**

This engagement will include a focused effort to get the books prepared for review, get the store's appearance ready for review, and fully package the business for a sale.

*For more information, contact Steve Merrick at [srmspirit@hotmail.com](mailto:srmspirit@hotmail.com) or call (304) 280-6261.*

# Golden Nuggets

by Seema and Fahim Mojawalla

We go to a lot of events—those hosted by AMBC, RSA, and a number of other industry and non-industry related organizations. Often, when we get back from these events, we find ourselves each with pages and pages of notes. From those notes, we find little golden nuggets that help us and our business over and over again. We want to share some of those nuggets with you from our recent experience at AMBC's The Event in Phoenix:

- People are paying for experience. How many places can sell the same thing? Don't differentiate yourself by what you sell, but rather by the experience guests have when they're in your store.
- Stop using a generic email address like Gmail, Yahoo, or Outlook. Instead, make sure that your email is you@yourstore.com. It's super cheap and easy to set up through G Suite. Look into it. It will make your business appear so much more professional when communicating with your clients.
- Print is evolving. To attract more print business, think apps and recycling and signage. Packaging companies need to adapt too, and there truly are opportunities everywhere.
- Generosity is prosperity. Be generous with your time, talent, connection, attention, energy, resources, and money.
- When to say no (from Warren Buffet):
  - To negative people who are nothing but takers and don't have intention of giving.
  - To networking meetings with only business card exchanges, but no relationship building.
  - To opportunities and things that don't excite you, speak to your values, or further your mission in life.
  - To overworking. While it's true some successful people and many entrepreneurs put in 60 to 80 hours per week, very successful people aren't workaholics who neglect self-care and family. They recognize that if they can't take care of themselves, everything else suffers.
  - To doing all the work. This comes down to one word: D-E-L-E-G-A-T-I-O-N.
- Combine online and offline strategies. Work on creating events in your stores that physically get people in and participating. As a result, they'll talk about it ... and your services. Then, share those events online and with your local press. This could be anything from an event to create care packages to send to the troops, an evening to honor local residents from a nearby senior community, or even a partnership with your local Chamber of Commerce to host an after-hours mingle at your shop.
- To turn drop-offs into dollars, provide coupons with your drop-off receipts. Place those receipts inside printed folders, which have all your services nicely laid out. Get to know your drop-off clients on a personal basis. Encourage them to ask questions about your business so that they can tell others. Once they need one of your services, they will keep you in mind. Being kind takes courage, but it's an excellent business builder.
- What to say on social media: Tell authentic stories and be sure to keep it entertaining and/or educational. In short, evoke emotion by authenticity and transparency. Social media allows you and your business to stay "top of mind" with your clients. Keep consistently posting.
- Brian Solis quote from September 28, 2019 on Instagram: We all want to change, but doing so requires going outside of our comfort zone and doing some hard work ... and most people are not ready to do it. This is why complacency kills businesses and relationships. Do something different.
- Ask people who come into your store how you can make it better.
- Be sure to change your retail space at least once every quarter. You'd be surprised how much your retail items will sell.
- Remember the saying, "Diversify or die." It's more relevant today than ever. We need to constantly be adding new and forward-thinking services and products in order to keep us viable and growing in our rapidly changing industry.
- Earn trust; build relationships; generously provide value so that people keep coming back.
- Get better clients. 20% of your clients will bring you 80% of the business. Build relationships with your mailbox and printing clients to sell them other services that they need so that they're happier doing business for all their service needs in one place and they continue referring your business to their network.

*(continued on next page)*



# NUGGETS...

Continued from page 14

- Do work that matters. Be in business to make a difference every day so that you don't call it "work!"
- Hire the right people. Make your staff feel part of a team. Allow them to give you opinions about how to improve your services.
- Don't say no to freight just because you don't have space, staff, know-how, etc. Remember, "it's just a bigger box." Where there's a will, there's a way.
- Implement digital mail. Just do it! Don't wait, diversify your physical mailboxes with digital ones.
- How to market printing: Work with local businesses, organizations and influential members of your community to gain more business. Cultivate relationships in your community to grow your own business. Learn to give your time to others who will reciprocate.
- Make a list containing each month of 2020. This will become your master plan to add one new service each month. Then, stick to that plan. Write it down. When you write it down, you hold yourself accountable. Work with another store owner, if possible, to help you stay on track for the next year's growth. Then put a calendar reminder in to do the same practice every fall for the following year's plan.

- New user forums are now launched on the AMBC website. All members have access with their existing login emails and passwords.

So, get started today! Ask, find, grow, network, and most importantly, do! Here's to more profits, learning, and innovation.



**Seema Mojawalla** has a unique viewpoint that is always fresh, forward-thinking, and focused. She has an eye for merchandising and a passion for finding the perfect products to sell at Seema Boutique, located within the Spa of Shipping, Island Ship Center, an experience-based retail shipping spa located five miles south of Niagara Falls in Grand Island, New York, which she co-owns with her husband Fahim. Seema serves on the AMBC Board of Directors as Director of Innovation. #QueenofRetail



**Fahim Mojawalla** is a social media guru known for his love of hashtags. He uses them to explain his #FahimFix ideas—ideas which he shares as an instructor at industry events and at FahimFix.com. He serves on the AMBC Board of Directors as Director of Social Media and Board Chair and, along with his wife Seema, is an effervescent co-owner of Island Ship Center, the Spa of Shipping. Be sure to follow islandshipcenter.com and @islandshipcenter on your favorite social media channels. #FahimFix



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# Ask Uncle Marty™



*If you would like to submit a letter to Ask Uncle Marty™, please email him at [marty@ambc.org](mailto:marty@ambc.org). Anonymity is guaranteed, and names are always changed.*

Dear Uncle Marty,

We get very demoralized by certain things that happen almost every single day. Customers come in, usually not regulars (although they quite often think of themselves as regular because they have come in five times in 20 years), then have us proceed through the shipping process and then "reveal" that whatever price we come up with, through which-ever carrier, is ridiculous because ... take your pick here ... the "old guy" (meaning former owner) *never* charged them that much, or they already checked online and it *should* cost them blah blah blah. Often, they do their self-righteous little tirade and walk out.

The problem is, it *is* cheaper online (if they can figure out how to print a label) and it *is* cheaper at the Post Office (about 90 feet away from our store).

We try to be transparent and honest about most of that. Most of our customers have been coming for decades, so they don't really care that it's cheaper and/or they just choose us because we provide better end-to-end customer service. Many, perhaps 75%, know it's cheaper at the Post Office, but don't care. That's a perk of having some of the wealthiest customers on the planet (and that's not an exaggeration).

But, some of them make a *huge* embarrassing scene, not only in the store, but we recently heard that one such woman was at the gym and was literally on a tirade about what a rip-off our business is. I mean like for hours.

We don't have the background to know how to deal with any of the above. We just try to explain that our cost structure is indeed entirely different than online or at a franchise store. (I mean, seriously, we do pay nearly \$6K in monthly rent and our tiers probably aren't the best ... and lots of other things.)

Any wisdom on how you handle this kind of stuff?

Sincerely,  
Fed-Up in Fredonia

Dear Fed-Up,

Your question is a very good one ... and a tough one. First, it's important to remember that not everyone is your client. Your service appeals to a certain market, and there will always be the bottom-line seekers who

are oblivious to the fact that you're a retail store and not a carrier-owned shipping counter. Those who wouldn't use you because they don't understand the value you provide are the same that will be upset when they do use you and then realize on the back-end that they paid more than they would elsewhere. They'll complain, tell others, and worst of all potentially write bad reviews ... simply because they were ignorant as to where they were doing business and felt duped after the transaction. It's much better to wish those people well and send them to the Post Office, rather than trying to sell them hard and have them be upset and do damage to your reputation afterwards.

I have a generally affluent customer base as well. Most don't care about price or even have a clue what to compare it to, yet I find it very important to remain transparent and up front that our shop is not a Post Office. When and if the price question comes up, I always tell them that we have top-tier discounts on the commercial carriers and offer very competitive pricing on them, but that USPS is always cheaper at a Post Office than at a retail store. Sometimes they'll ask how much cheaper, and I'll tell them that we're happy to provide a quote and then they can go around the corner to The UPS Store to get a quote (because I know when they do that they'll come running back to us), or they're welcome to wait in line at the Post Office, fill out labels by hand, and save a few dollars. It's extremely rare that someone actually does go to the Post Office after they see the value we provide in the making-it-easy department. But, every once in a great while, someone will thank us for our honesty and then head to the Post Office. Those are the people for whom money is much more valuable than time. Our clients, in contrast, are those for whom time is much more valuable than money.

I think it's very important not to think of regular and/or non-regular visitors to your store simply as just "customers." I like to think of mine as "clients" or "potential clients." The word "customer" is transactional, like someone coming in, paying money, and then leaving without much thought of it thereafter. It doesn't allude to a relationship or any loyalty. But a client is different. With a client, you know their name, their business, what they want, and the best way to serve them. Clients are locked in, for lack of a better phrase, and come back again and

*(continued on page 18)*



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# ASK UNCLE MARTY...

Continued from page 16

again because you hold their best interests at heart. And, when we don't know them well (like a potential client), we make an effort to get to know them and show them that we're there to make their life easier and not just take their money.

Our industry has been built on selling service. Don't think of it as selling shipping, selling boxes, selling stamps, selling printing, or selling anything else. Think of what you're selling simply as the service you provide. The tangible things are a bonus. That service is what clients pay for, whether your model is modest, competitive prices or high-end, premium prices. Pricing is something you must decide based on your clientele and what they're looking for.

If your clients are comparing your rates to online rates, then they're not comparing apples to apples. You need to let them know that. If they want the online price, they have to do it all themselves, print the label, fill out the paperwork, determine for themselves what the best option is, and follow-up directly with the carriers should there be an issue. In contrast, when they ship through you, you do all the thinking for them. You know the difference between the carriers and services, compare them all to help them find what suits their needs best, then do all the typing, packing, label printing, customs documentation, follow-up after the shipment to make sure it's delivered safely, etc. You make it easy!

You are the solution to the very complicated shipping world, and as the expert they come to you. If you're not perceived as an expert, then people will be hesitant to pay rates worthy of expert service. Professionalism, knowledge, confidence, and kindness are essential to justify premium rates for premium service.

Think of it this way: there are people in the world who are very happy with a \$12 haircut that takes less than 10 minutes at the discount barber. They don't want anything fancy. They're not out to impress anyone and the experience of getting a haircut means nothing to them. They'd rather just get it over with and get on with their day. But then there are those who want a full-service salon experience. They want make an appointment so they have a dedicated stylist who will help them look their best, be greeted by name when they come in, have someone take their coat, be told what nice hair they have, be listened to (that's the key right there), be treated like royalty, and therefore feel like royalty when they leave the salon. You need to provide a salon experience to your clients. Compliment them. Listen to them. Get to know them. Go out of your way to treat them like royalty so they leave feeling as if they've just held court.

To get, you first must give. To make a client out of a customer, you first must give. Give those newcomers something to think about. Wow them with an experi-

ence they'd never expect at a shipping place. They likely come to you after being used to the Post Office and Post Office pricing, which is why they may be shocked at a retail price at a retail store. But that means they're also used to Post Office lines, forms, and customer service (or lack thereof, as sometimes is the case). So, greet them as they walk through your door. Go out from behind the counter and carry their packages for them (or help them from their cars). Show them all the extra stuff you do above and beyond what they'd get elsewhere:

- Free tracking number with USPS
- Complimentary taping to ensure their shipment travels safely
- Education about the shipping cycle and why proper packaging is important
- Comparing options all in one screen between USPS, FedEx, DHL, etc., to help them find the best service for their needs
- Prompt and professional follow-up should they have any questions after the transaction
- The list goes on...

Most importantly, make sure that you invite them to come back again soon. Don't say "goodbye" or "have a nice day" or any other overused phrase that they'll hear at every other shop they visit that day, but rather say "I hope you visit us again soon!" or something like that to wrap up the interaction. Then give them a post card, folder, or brochure outlining all your other services so they know all the things that they can "come back soon" for.

Show them your gratitude that they came in, then welcome them back, and they'll feel like a true guest and not just a customer ... and want to come back. You probably do a lot of this already, but maybe if you're more conscious of these as client-building actions and not just nice things that you inherently do, you may just gain more long-term, loyal, fighting-for-you clients! (Speaking of treating clients like guests, there are a few stores in our industry that use "guest" instead of "customer" or "client." I really like that phrasing too. It's a business model choice, so find out what fits your market, your store, and your personality.)

You need to keep top-of-mind with your clients as well. That means, for those whom you know and have built a relationship with, send holiday cards, birthday cards, sympathy cards, and handwritten thank you notes. I do holiday cards every December to hundreds of my favorite clients (not biggest spenders, necessarily, but those who are the most loyal regardless of dollars spent), this past year including a generous \$20 off coupon to thank them for their friendship; I got a very large percentage of

*(continued on next page)*



# ASK UNCLE MARTY...

Continued from page 18

those coupons back with overwhelming gratitude from the recipients. That's the type of thing that builds client loyalty ... and loyal clients create a snowball effect with their advocacy for your business, word-of-mouth advertising, five-star reviews, and referrals.

Smile. Smile. Smile. Win new clients with the positive environment in your store, the more-than-anticipated pleasant experience at the counter, and the friendship you offer. It takes time, but it builds, then eventually snowballs, and in the end will create for you a great reputation in your town and a very local client base of advocates that are bringing in more and more clients to you daily.

And, when someone does become upset or confused at your rates, diffuse the situation right there with an honest, kind explanation. Don't get your back up and become combative and defensive. Just be nice and plainly explain the difference between your business and the Post Office, then let them choose what service they'd prefer. Hopefully then the situations you mentioned in your letter will be fewer and farther between. It's much more important that someone leaves with a good taste in their mouth, knowing you've been both kind and honest with them, rather than leaving feeling as if they had just been in a contentious situation or perceive that they had been taken advantage of.

The bottom line is that you need to serve your clients as best you can, going out of your way to make their experience amazing, with true "wow factor," so they'll never go anywhere else. And then you have to identify who your clients are ... and, more importantly, who is not your client. And just because someone may not be your shipping client (yet), they still could be a printing client, shredding client, or whatever.

I know this answer has turned into a novel, and I apologize for the long-windedness. This is a topic I'm very passionate about and one that comes up again and again. I want to see my peers' businesses being so different—so much more outstanding—than any other shipping option out there that people aren't comparing prices. You'll get there. Just keep smiling.

Here's to a bright future,  
Uncle Marty

...

**Dear Uncle Marty,**

**I need to hire someone new. I know you've written about this before, and I've tried some of the methods you suggested but am not having any luck finding the right person. Any other ideas?**

**Thanks,  
Understaffed in Utah**

Dear Understaffed,

It sounds like you've tried the usual channels: online ads, "Now Accepting Applications" sign at your shop, asking your current team if they have family or friends they'd recommend, etc. If none of that has been successful yet, I indeed do have another suggestion for you: Hire your clients!

This topic came up again at AMBC's The Event in November. It was a great reminder to me that our best potential hiring field is right under our noses. So often we start our hiring search outside of our own doors, when really we should be starting by looking at what's right in front of us. Who better to sell our services than those who already appreciate it so much that they've become regular patrons?

Ask your clients directly if they're looking for a side job or some part-time hours. Clients might be caught off guard by you approaching them with this question—and obviously you're not going to ask that CEO who's always in a rush if she's looking for a job—but you can generally tell those who might be interested, and all you need to do is just bring it up. They'll probably be flattered that you asked, even if they're not interested, and the conversations that start as a result have a good chance of leading to the right person.

Your clients know your business better than you may think. They'll know who to recommend, even if they're not job hunting themselves, because they know the type of people they'd want helping them: friendly, caring, kind, and outgoing ... with big smiles and big hearts.

Happy hiring,  
Uncle Marty

...

**Marty Johnson** is a shopkeeper, writer, and business coach. He serves as ex officio Director of Communication for AMBC, Editor of MBC Today, and is the owner of Uncle Marty's Shipping Office in Ithaca, NY, where he's also Co-Founder of the Collegetown Small Business Alliance. Please visit him at [askunclemarty.com](http://askunclemarty.com). #AskUncleMarty



*"Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving."*  
- W.T. Purkiser



# The Event Recap

by Marty Johnson

*AMBC's The Event, November 1-3 in Phoenix, AZ, was a huge success!*



Every year, I look forward to seeing so many of our AMBC Members at different events we have across the country, and I always leave those events with a big smile, grateful for everything that everyone shared, grateful to be part of such an outstanding #MembersHelpingMembers organization, and grateful to have the opportunity to share with others some of what I myself have learned over the years.

But something about this year's event—appropriately titled “The Event”—left me with an even bigger grin. The spirit in Phoenix was so very uplifting. Everyone was there with such great attitudes, ready to share, listen, learn, explain, question, and dig into topics that are so relevant for 21st century business.

No longer are we stuck at industry events bemoaning drop-offs, complaining about carrier policies and grumpy customers, or feeling down-trodden. No, now we come to these events excited about the amazing, diverse opportunities that are set-up for us to take advantage of. We've put the past in the past and are now looking toward a very bright future for our full-service business centers, each with its own unique market niche that it caters to. It's so exciting! There's a hopefulness in the air, and an increasing helpfulness in our members' spirits.

I'm sure you've seen the schedule for The Event in countless AMBC e-blasts and splayed across the pages of the past few issues of *MBC Today*, so I won't bore you with a step-by-step recap of every hour. But I will say that the quality of the presentations was outstanding.

I left with pages of notes from Lisa and Fahim's presentation on employee recruiting and engagement; the information in the social media solutions seminar was great fuel to boost my own online presence; there were excellent round tables, from which I learned just as much from those at my tables than what I felt I had to share with them. All in all, it was a rich, non-stop, info- and hint-fueled weekend worth its weight in gold.

We must express our gratitude again and again for The Event's sponsors—AMBC Trusted Suppliers who are always by our side. For the meals, the drinks, the snacks, the breaks, the tables at the vendor fair, and the years of friendship, we send another huge thank you to FedEx, ShipRite, PC Synergy, Makers of PostalMate®, Refund Retriever, GO Logistic, PostScan Mail, and of course our good buddies at Olson & Ives.

Another large debt of gratitude goes to the Hilton Phoenix Airport, who truly rolled out the red carpet for us. Their staff and service were outstanding—the best I've seen in many years of helping with these types of events.

All AMBC Members may go to [ambc4me.org/resources](http://ambc4me.org/resources) to access many of the documents presented in classes at The Event. Use these resources to help you grow your profits and keep organized with your key metrics.

Be sure to plan to attend AMBC's next event, the 2020 Visionary Summit in St. Louis, April 16th-19th.

For more photos, check out [tinyurl.com/rttokf6](http://tinyurl.com/rttokf6)





*"It was so good to see you in Phoenix and I look forward to next time already. I was going over all my notes and I have quite the to-do list! Everyone was so helpful and willing to help everyone else. Truly, members helping members!"*

- Mary Bray, Pak Mail, San Marcos, TX



*"I have been attending these events for a very long time, and I can tell you that the value of the information given here [in Phoenix] far exceeds the cost of [AMBC] membership and attendance!"*

- Michael Castillo, Postal Max, Scottsdale, AZ



*More photos next page...*





## Holiday Prep Resources

In the *MBC Today* archives, there are a plethora of articles with helpful tips, tricks, and reminders to get your store ready for the December holiday shipping rush. We suggest you scour through the past end-of-year issues to glean as much as you can to make this December your best one yet!

To get you started, here are some suggestions:

### ***Preparing Your Store for 2018 Holiday Season***

Volume 20, Issue 5 (September / October 2018), page 20

### ***Pay Attention to Retention***

by Norman Froscher

Volume 20, Issue 6 (November / December 2018), page 20

### ***Ask Uncle Marty™ about holiday gifts for clients***

by Marty Johnson

Volume 19, Issue 6 (November / December 2017), page 24

### ***Naughty or Nice***

by Marty Johnson

Volume 17, Issue 6 (November / December 2015), page 6

### ***Ask Uncle Marty™ about shaking up your December marketing***

by Marty Johnson

Volume 17, Issue 6 (November / December 2015), page 16

### ***Become a Hero: Reroute a Package***

by FedEx

Volume 17, Issue 6 (November / December 2015), page 20

### ***Members' Tips for the Holiday Shipping Season***

Volume 16, Issue 11 (November 2014), page 14

# Lessons from the Archives

Enjoy this throwback article from a past issue of *MBC Today*.

Remember, AMBC Members have access to all past issues in the Members Only section of [ambc4me.org](http://ambc4me.org).

## The Right Attitude Can Change Your World

by Kim Galloway

Originally published in *MBC Today* Volume 16, Issue 4 (April 2014)

Maybe this sounds like an overstatement, but I truly believe that the right attitude can completely change your outlook on clients, sales, business in general, ... and life.

Take your most “challenging” customer. Maybe they come in demanding service, but don’t want to pay for it. Maybe they are rude to you, demean you, or make you want to scream at them to leave. They have a terrible attitude. Right?

Now, let’s flip it. Maybe your customer doesn’t need the attitude adjustment, but rather you do! You can choose to let their behavior ruin your day, make you want to change your career, or just close your doors and work at 7-Eleven for the rest of your days. But don’t. Be a better person; be a happy person.

It may seem hard to get out of the tunnel you’ve made for yourself when you get that grumpy customer in your store. But the big picture reality is so simple—it was just one person, and they are now gone. Move on! Enjoy the rest of your day; enjoy the rest of your clients. Remember, the vast majority of them are bringing in business and you want them to come back again and again to your happy, smiling face.

If someone starts to get the best of you, take a break. There is nothing wrong with needing time to collect your thoughts and fix your attitude for the next customer. Bring yourself back up to a winning attitude and get ready to move on with the day without the negativity.

I dealt with the same unhappy person for years and years. Nothing was going to change their attitude. I kept mine—smiling, asking how I can help them out today, and doing the best I could at my job. And you know what? The last time they came in, I got a nice firm handshake and a big thank you for always being a kind, professional person to deal with. Who knows what kind of other people they deal with on a regular basis. Maybe I was the only smiling person they saw all day.

When you think you just can’t handle another grumpy face, do something you might not have thought of doing. Do something nice for someone else!

If you know one of your boxholders is down on their luck, pay a month of their mailbox rent and leave them a nice note saying so. If one of your regular clients just had surgery, send them a get well card with a gift certificate or a book of stamps. The great feeling you get doing something *nice* for someone

else is absolutely amazing ... and so worth it. It may seem like silly little thing to do, might not even cost you a dime, but what it will mean to that person is priceless.

One act of kindness has the ability to wipe out the bad feelings left behind from several grumpy customers. Try it.

...



**Kim Galloway**, AMBC's Director of Operations, indeed needs no introduction. If you've called AMBC any time in the last decade, there's a good chance the friendly voice that answered was Kim's. She is passionate about excellent service and looks for innovative ways to help AMBC Members navigate the multitude of challenges and opportunities facing them in this age of constant change.

There are apps now for both Facebook Pages and Google My Business. If you don't have them already, download them today! They make managing your reviews, direct messages, likes, feedback, analytics, and so much more super easy.





# Employee Hiring and Retention

by Lisa Blanton and Norman Froscher

There's a meme that states that an entrepreneur is someone who works 80 hours a week in order to avoid working 40. While there is a great deal of truth in this, one of the biggest challenges we face as pack and ship store owners is how we recruit, hire, train, and retain high quality employees so that we not only reduce the number of hours we work, but also grow our businesses and make sure that the hours we spend are being utilized properly.

One of the biggest expenses companies of all sizes face is onboarding a new employee. None of the services we offer require a rocket science degree, but most of our stores have multiple revenue streams which can take time to learn and can be daunting for a new person. It is critical that we start the process successfully, so that we aren't banging our heads against the new hire wall.

But before we start filling your new employee's head with dimensional weights, proper packaging, and how to handle drop-offs, where do we start in finding someone? The best source for finding someone is going to be your current employees and customers. They know your business and are more likely to be able to recommend someone that would be a good fit. Next, social media offers an opportunity to find potential employees because they may already be following your store. Facebook offers a free job posting service. You can also post the job on boards like Craigslist and Indeed.

The important part of your job posting is to be authentic and specific about the job and the skills required. If an important part of the job is to be able to lift 35 pounds, you want to make certain that it is listed. You also want to let the candidate know why they should want to come to work for you. Lastly, you should give them an indication of what a typical day includes.

Now, let's say you have written a compelling job posting and the applications have poured in. There are several potential candidates among the applications, so you call them in for an interview. This is a critical step in making certain that your potential employee is set up for success once they are hired. In this interview, you are getting to know them and also letting them know what your store culture is and your expectations of them.

Typically, the first thing you want to ask is "How was your drive in?" This will set them at ease and give you valuable information on whether their commute is going to be a daily issue where they are always late or is too far for them to be reliable. One of the next questions we ask (not so much a question) is "Tell us about yourself." Resist the temptation to fill any silence and speak here. This is a perfect chance for them to tell you things that you cannot legally ask, but also what kind of personality they have. (We always hire on personality and train on skill.)

Recently, someone shared with us another good question to ask in the interview: "Explain to me how to make an omelet." This may not seem to have anything to do with your business, but the act of explaining the steps

involved shows you how clearly the candidate can articulate instructions, which is an essential skill in communicating with clients and guests in your store.

Finally, in the interview we also ask candidates to describe how they handled a difficult person or problem. We do this because we know in our business those times may certainly occur and we need employees that are able to handle them.

You want to go over with them what a typical day at your business would look like and let them know what your expectations are for them and the type of culture you have for your store. Find out what their expectations are regarding the type of schedule they want, salary, and job advancement potential. Having everything clear at the outset will reduce eliminate problems and stop a potential turnstile of new employees not working out.

Once you've made a hiring decision, it is critical that you review your mission statement with your new hire so they are working toward the same goals you are. Make sure they're on board with the core values of your business, what you support, and your reason for being in business in the first place. Let them know what the pay and schedule will be. Also, let them know what the training plan is. Go over your expectations as far as attendance, attitude, and behavior. Lastly, let them know why you selected them—what specific attributes they demonstrated rather than just being a warm body off the street that fit the apron.



On their first day, the new hire will likely be nervous and excited ... and you begin the training phase. Part of it is in your training manual (you do have a training manual, right?) and part of it is hands-on. It is important that you address the “why” we do things the way we do. Millennials and Gen Z want to feel invested in what they are doing, but more importantly they want to know the “why.” It’s not just “because I said so.” If they understand the reason and what could potentially go wrong, they are more likely to buy in to what you are asking.

Show them how to meet your store’s values and mission statement. Follow your training guidelines and update it weekly with them so that they know their progress. Make certain their goals are clear and that you follow up with them to ensure they are achieving them. Find out how comfortable they are with what they are learning.

As entrepreneurs, we sometimes think we know what employees want based on our desires and thoughts. Often, this is not the case. Multiple surveys from employers list good wages and job security as the top factors. But, most employees list appreciation for a job well done and feeling “in” on things as more important. While wages and job security are important, understanding life events and personal issues will often make your employee feel that you are more invested in them in more ways than just a financial aspect. Ask for their input and help; respect their needs and feelings.

An important part of retaining key employees is to make certain that we make them feel engaged in our store; that they are a part of it. When they go above and beyond, reward them. Make certain the reward is specific. Post the recognition on social media. Celebrate their personal events like birthdays, graduations, weddings, and work anniversaries.

Lastly, once you have an employee, just like when you gain a client, remember that the job has just begun. As with the client who you want to return because they have a positive experience every time they visit, it is critical that your employee continues to feel like a vital and important part of your team. As we previously stated, this isn’t just about financial rewards. It’s continual training, growth, and feedback. Most of our employees will not be a long term; the days of working toward a gold watch at the end of a 40-year career with the same company are

almost non-existent. But, the more we have our team engaged and invested in our stores and mission, the longer and better they will be help out.

Let’s do everything we can to build happy, caring, bonded, engaged teams. It makes our days better, our businesses stronger, our ability to grow easier, and those 80 hours we work each week much more enjoyable and productive.

...

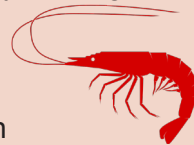


**Lisa Blanton**, when not working her full-time job of keeping Norman in line at Espresso Mail and handling the accounting and financial aspects of the business, has an additional full-time accounting job in the private sector. She’s an advocate for AMBC and genuinely likes helping other stores. Her favorite drink is our frozen charcoal mocha.



**Norman Froscher** and his wife Lisa co-own Espresso Mail in West Palm Beach, Florida and Norman serves on the AMBC Board of Directors as Director of Engagement and Board Vice Chair. When he’s not packing, shipping, or printing, he’s looking for a good cup of coffee or espresso, which makes it really convenient that he has a coffee bar in his store. #NormanKnows

Find something nagging on your to-do list that has been back-burnered for entirely too long: weeks, months, or maybe even years. Is it making that call to get your outdoor lighted sign fixed? Is it having that one-on-one chat with a team member to correct a problem that’s gotten out of hand? Is it emailing that supplier to get on board with their offerings?



As Nike says, “JUST DO IT.” You’ll be very glad you did.

# USP: Unique Selling Proposition

by Norman Froscher and Lisa Blanton

**H**aving a coffeeshop in our store makes us different from most pack and ship stores. But while it makes us different from an operational standpoint, it's not our Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

According to the encyclopedia on entrepreneur.com, a Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is "the factor or consideration presented by a seller as the reason that one product or service is different from and better than that of the competition."

If you try to compete on price alone, you're diluting your worth. In our industry, we don't have the economies of scale. It's difficult to make margins that are

sustainable and, if price is the only differentiation, someone will come along and offer the same product for a few cents less.

Often people will say that "customer service" is what makes them different. But this isn't really a USP. It's a white noise buzzword phrase which is heard all the time and frankly has lost a lot of meaning as a result. Just saying that you have great customer service rarely plays into potential clients' selection process.

To truly uncover your USP, put yourself in your clients' shoes. Find out what their needs are; know what motivates their behaviors and buying decisions; know the real reasons why they choose you over other businesses.

Once you find what makes you different from your competitors, then you can market to that.

One example of a famous USP used to be Domino's Pizza. They offered a 30-minute delivery guarantee or it was free. They didn't say they had the best tasting pizza or the lowest price. They offered a tangible value: fast service.

Charles Revson, founder of Revlon, always used to say he "sold hope, not makeup."

What's our USP at Espresso Mail? We're problem solvers. It's why our clients come to us; it's why our business continues to grow; it's that unique characteristic that sets our business apart from the crowd. We find solutions for our clients, both inside and outside of the box, and our reputation as problem solvers in our community continues to grow.

What features of your business jump out as things that set you apart? What can you promote that will make customers want to patronize your business? How can you position your business to highlight your USP?

Create and live up to that image once you've determined your USP. Make sure you understand it, and that your clients know it as well.

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# AMBC4ME...

## our online AMBC Member forum



Your mentors are just a click away! Go to [ambc4me.org/forums](https://ambc4me.org/forums), log in, and start asking and answering questions to and from fellow AMBC Members across the country. This is a popular, exclusive benefit for AMBC Members. If you are having trouble, please email [hello@ambc4me.org](mailto:hello@ambc4me.org).

**Here are a few snippets of recent posts in the AMBC4ME forum:**

...

**I have a customer who wants to open a business mailbox for himself, where he is the representative for a business, but has no business license. He's kind of like an independent consultant for a company, selling their product but not the owner of the company. Not sure if this makes any sense. I'd like some insight if anyone has some for me.**

– CC

Just wondering. When we have a customer who wants to open a box for business, do we need to get a copy of their business license? Thank you. – A

We ask them to provide it. Often, though, they are using the mailbox address to get their business license with the state of Florida (where our business is). If that's the case, we pull the info from the state website or have them send it to us. – NF

I don't think I have ever asked for a business license from a mailbox customer. As long as he is providing complete ID for himself and lists the business and is completing the 1583 properly, adding the business name as a DBA (doing business as). I would be leery if he tried to use the business full legal name or something like that. You just want to make sure he isn't trying to assume their identity. Just specify that the mail must come in addressed properly. Stress that importance that if there's no 1583 on file, then there's no mail. – JB

...

**Does anyone know if disposable e-cigarettes (no battery, but liquid) can be shipped to Italy? – KV**

I would not touch them with a 10-foot pole for shipping. We do not accept them at our store. I believe the carriers have restrictions on them. We just don't accept. – JB

...

**Great article on how to increase retail sales:**  
<https://www.lightspeedhq.com/blog/increase-retail-sales/> – PSE

...

**I just want to say thank you for always being available and quick to share your vast knowledge and experience with this group. Jeff mostly sticks out in my mind right now, as he has been answering so many questions so quickly lately. I don't reply often, but I do read the threads in digest form and have learned a great deal, even on subjects that do not apply to me (yet). Please accept my sincere appreciation and gratitude for ALL you ladies and gentlemen have contributed with store owners all over, that may feel as I once did: like a small fish in a big lake. I've learned so many things through this group and the peer forums that have helped my business grow to where it is today.**

**Thank you, thank you, thank you! – AS**

You're very welcome. I'm always happy to help when I can. Glad you have found the information useful and helpful. – JB

Thank you to all who responded to the copier issue I was having. All information was very helpful and useful in negotiating a fairer price with the company I was dealing with. – PM

To all of you who wrote and called to help me find the 4"x72yd clear, label protection tape, thank you! What a great bunch of folks here at AMBC. – SG

My sincere thanks to the AMBC Members who responded to my request about shipping valuable art. I got some very helpful and informative emails. – DW



# AMBC Trusted Supplier Spotlight

In each issue of *MBC Today*, we feature two AMBC Trusted Suppliers so our members can get to know them better. These are people and companies that we admire and trust, and we know you'll benefit from them.

## Company Name:

FedEx



## Contact:



Ty Deal, Marketing Specialist Advisor  
1 (901) 434-5494  
[ty.deal@fedex.com](mailto:ty.deal@fedex.com)

## What products / services do you offer?

FedEx provides customers and businesses worldwide with a broad portfolio of transportation, e-commerce, and business services. For AMBC Members, FedEx offers a variety of domestic and international shipping services, including FedEx Express, FedEx Ground, and FedEx Home Delivery to meet your customers' varying shipping needs.

## What benefit(s) do you bring to AMBC Members?

AMBC Members who join the FedEx Authorized ShipCenter (FASC) program receive competitive pricing on shipping services, discounted or waived surcharges, compensation for accepting drop-off packages, and access to marketing materials.

## What new or growing opportunities do you see for AMBC Members in the future, and what can you do to help them?

There's an opportunity for AMBC Members to take advantage of eCommerce-driven behaviors by positioning your store as a convenient option for receipt of packages purchased online as well as for handling pre-labeled returns.

Porch piracy concerns are increasing the need for safe, secure package acceptance locations, so promoting your mailbox services as a key value to online shoppers can reap huge benefits. The fact that you can offer package receiving services for all shipping carriers is another added benefit. FASCs should be actively promoting their value as a drop-off location as well. Pre-labeled returns are an easy way to drive up drop-off volumes and get new customers through your doors.

## Where to follow:

[www.fedex.com/en-us/home.html](http://www.fedex.com/en-us/home.html)  
[www.fascnet.com](http://www.fascnet.com)

## Company Name:

PC Synergy  
Makers of PostalMate®



## Contact:

Sarah Rohde, Marketing Manager  
1 (800) 485-6901, extension 227  
[sarah@pcsynergy.com](mailto:sarah@pcsynergy.com)



*The PC Synergy Team*

## What products / services do you offer?

We are a two-product company. PostalMate® Classic, which is the #1 choice for retail shipping software, is used by over 80% of automated mail and parcel centers. Our enterprise product, PostalMate® Flex, is currently deployed in over 600 corporate international locations.

## What benefit(s) do you bring to AMBC Members?

At PC Synergy, we believe in the power of ongoing personal development. We provide continuing education opportunities for our customers through weekly training snippet videos on Facebook, bi-monthly training webinars, a library of online tutorials and videos, as well as bi-lingual tech support that is answered live, 60% of the time. We provide detailed training at five to six PostalMate® regional weekend events every year as well as overview training at trade association events like AMBC's The Event.

## What new or growing opportunities do you see for AMBC Members in the future, and what can you do to help them?

Diversification and staying current with consumer buying trends will continue to play a major role in the relevance of mail and business centers. With the doubling in growth that is expected in online purchasing by next year, the customer's pickup and returns experience will play a major role in future buying decisions. We believe that by providing customers with something extra, something unexpectedly positive, they will be more likely to return and share their experience with their friends and family.

PostalMate® provides opportunities to delight customers by providing additional options for both inbound and outbound packages. The ability to add insurance to drop-offs, provide email notifications and accounting for package receiving and drop-offs, as well as the option to add a marketing message to receipts and emails all offer that little something extra.

## Where to follow:

[pcsynergy.com](http://pcsynergy.com) | Facebook @postalmate  
Instagram @pcsynergy | Twitter @postalmate

# AMBC Trusted Supplier Directory

*Supplies, products, and services from companies you can trust.*



## EXCLUSIVE PLATINUM SUPPLIER

### FedEx

[www.fascnet.com](http://www.fascnet.com)

800-496-9310

*Ground & Express Shipping*

## GOLD SUPPLIERS

### Pacific Office Automation

[www.pacificoffice.com](http://www.pacificoffice.com)

855-530-5790

*National Account Copier & Print Equipment*

### PostScan Mail

[www.postscanmail.com/partner-signup.html](http://www.postscanmail.com/partner-signup.html)

800-624-5866

[support@postscanmail.com](mailto:support@postscanmail.com)

*Virtual Mailbox Solutions Provider*

## SILVER SUPPLIERS

### International Package Shipping

[www.internationalpackageshipping.com](http://www.internationalpackageshipping.com)

[info@internationalpackageshipping.com](mailto:info@internationalpackageshipping.com)

413-693-0065

*Low-Cost International Shipping Option*

### GO Logistic

[www.gologistic.com](http://www.gologistic.com)

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716-773-2929

[info@socialstatusmarketing.com](mailto:info@socialstatusmarketing.com)

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[www.capitallivescan.com](http://www.capitallivescan.com)

916-663-3088

*California Live Scan Equipment*

### Cayan

[www.cayan.com](http://www.cayan.com)

617-896-5528

*Credit Card Processing*

### DHL

[www.dhl.com](http://www.dhl.com)

844-697-7377

*International Express Deliveries*

### Office Depot

[www.business.officedepot.com](http://www.business.officedepot.com)

815-316-8255

*Discounts on over 3,500 Products – Call AMBC*

### PackageMapping.com

[www.packagemapping.com](http://www.packagemapping.com)

815-316-8255

[hello@ambc4me.org](mailto:hello@ambc4me.org)

*Global Package Tracking Services*

### ShipRite Software

[www.shiprite.net](http://www.shiprite.net)

315-733-6191

*MPC POS Software & Store Posters*

### SRM Spirit Group

[srmspirit@hotmail.com](mailto:srmspirit@hotmail.com)

304-280-6261

*Business Coaching – Onsite Visits*

### Staples

[www.staplesadvantage.com](http://www.staplesadvantage.com)

585-414-2205

*Ship & Pack & Office Supplies*

*Distributor*

### USPS

[www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com)

800-275-8777

*Postal Shipping*

### UPS

[www.ups.com](http://www.ups.com)

877-543-4207

*Ground & Express Shipping*



# MBC Funnies

"Straight from the Customer's Mouth"

Lady comes in with a small envelope, closed with a tiny piece of tape that is about to pop off, spilling her tax information all over the mail stream, and says, "This is a letter to the IRS. I only taped it a little bit because they won't open envelopes that are taped, right?"

...

"Does this package contain anything fragile, liquid, perishable, or potentially hazardous, including lithium batteries, mercury, or perfume?"

"Um. I guess just fragile."

"What's in the package?"

"Clothes."

"Oh, OK. So actually nothing fragile then?"

"Well clothes are fragile. I mean, if someone went all crazy and stabbed this a bunch of times then the clothes would rip."

...

First thing in the morning, this guy walks up the street and stands in front of the closed restaurant next door, staring at its front door. The sign on their door very clearly reads their hours are "11-9." The guy then opens my door and yells in, "Yeah, they're supposed to be open until 9 but their door is locked." So I responded, "I believe that means 9pm, not 9am."

...

"Do you sell hairdryers?"

...

"What's cheaper, second day or overnight?"

...

Call from customer:

"Hi. I do all my shipping through you but have something to send international and it's pretty heavy, so I was just going to go to the Post Office. But I thought I'd check with you first to see if it's something you can handle."

"How heavy is the package?"

"Oh, it's gotta be like two pounds or so."

...

"You ship to Oregon, right?"

**MBC Funnies wants your submissions!**  
**Send your ridiculous, hilarious, or simply eye-rolling bits to [marty@ambc4me.org](mailto:marty@ambc4me.org).**

## A Little Something Extra

Recently, we ran into major problems with customs on a shipment we sent to China on behalf of a local college. We ship a lot for this college—this department in particular—and this was a routine shipment of their school's marketing material being sent to one of their school's ambassadors who was staying at a hotel in Beijing. We've done this sort of thing for them many times before.

It just so happened that, as soon as we sent the package, Chinese customs switched the system they were using. A very long story short, somehow this shipment got caught in a weird loop because of errors in the Chinese customs process and system switchover and this shipment ended up in a customs black hole for months (and still is stuck there, something we continue to follow up on every week). Needless to say, the ambassador's trip has long since finished and the shipment of school swag was now moot.

Technically our carrier wouldn't give a service failure refund because customs delays are not protected by their time guarantees. But I refused to make my client pay for this shipment, as they trusted us to get it there safely and on time and, as a result of this delay, the trip that their ambassador made was much less effective, not having the marketing materials they had hoped to give out on their visits. So, I felt it was the right thing to refund my client right away for all of their shipping charges ... over \$1000.00.

I sent our client a check and vowed to continue following up on this shipment to get it returned to sender (which I'm still working on). Even though this shipment never made it, our contact at the school was so grateful for our diligence and courtesy refund that she brought us in a big gift basket, full of local fall harvest apples, cider, jellies, and other treats. She wrote the nicest thank you note to accompany it.

Eventually, after escalating the situation through a series of reps, I was able to get a courtesy service failure credit from my carrier. So, it has all worked out in the end. Doing the right thing for your clients always pays off in the long run.

...

*A Little Something Extra would love your stories! Please write to us at [marty@ambc4me.org](mailto:marty@ambc4me.org) and share a brief paragraph or two about something extraordinary—or ordinary, with an extraordinary impact—that one of your clients has done for you. What prompted their generosity, and how has your business been brightened and strengthened by it in return?*



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