

# POSTAL NEWS

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- 1. Software development underpins Bybox commitment. April 7, 2008.**
- 2. Frustration increases over Truckee post office. April 6, 2008**
- 3. Many jobs to go at bankrupt postal group PIN. April 6, 2008.**
- 4. Not just a post office. April 7, 2008.**
- 5. Because of an ambiguous postal law. April 6, 2008.**
- 6. Postal Service Again Vexes Penny Pinchers. April 6, 2008.**

07/04/2008 : IT, RFID, Tags and Barcodes, News

## **1. Software development underpins Bybox commitment**

To meet new postal market challenges. The postal market is changing: operators want more control over final delivery to customers and customers want more flexibility over the time they collect their mail.

New state-of-the-art electronic lockers are increasingly being seen as the solution that meets both these needs. But they will only gain wide-scale acceptance if they can increase service flexibility, and to do this they need to be smart lockers.

At the forefront of the current locker revolution is ByBox, specialising in the development of electronic locker software and the network management support system that postal companies need to meet their goals and new customer demands.

Recognising that most postal companies have their own unique requirements, ByBox offers customers a complete design, test and production cycle for locker application software, including customisation to incorporate different payment systems including credit card payment, along with embedded barcode readers and label printers. Signature capture and biometric interface options are also available.

All requested features are designed into a software module that operates on an embedded Linux PC platform within the locker control console and is accessed via a 34 cm touch-screen interface. At the same time, standard locker software supplied by ByBox provides remote access for diagnostic work, and remote control along with real-time monitoring and reporting of all locker activity and any alarms.

The software gives operators greater control over a number of essential services. They include:

- Direct deliveries to the customer (via registered code or direct external database call)

- Diverted deliveries, which enhance management of 'failed first time at home address' deliveries
- A facility for customer returns to retailers
- The ability for customers to request deliveries to alternative locker sites – including shipping label printing and customer payment systems
- Enabling customer deliveries to postal addresses - including shipping label printing and customer payment systems

A remaining issue facing many postal operators is who will manage the locker network system - specifically the customer database, customer

communication, operational access and reporting, and maintenance.

There are three management options a ByBox customer can choose according to the level of support required:

**ByBox Managed:** ByBox will operate the user databases, system interfaces and locker network for the customer.

**Shared Management:** The customer operates the user database and ByBox operates system interfaces and maintain/manages the locker network on their behalf.

**Customer Managed:** ByBox maintains the network whilst the customer operates the database, the system interfaces and the locker network.

Whilst this takes care of the basic provision, ByBox recognises that other services will often be required to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of a locker network and its links to other areas of the operator's business and service offering.

According to need, ByBox offers many options that can be quickly integrated into any one of its postal locker networks. Customers can choose:

Customer database management

Customer messaging management (Email, SMS and MMS)

Customer loyalty card design and production

Customer locker network data exchange

Customer billing (using Near Field Communication, COD via credit or cash cards)

Customer direct mailing and messaging

Process design services

Network communication management (Ethernet, WiFi, 3G, GPRS)

Extranet data exchange between lockers and customer controlled databases

Web-based reporting for operations

Web-based reporting for customers

Web services interface

Real-time reservation services

Maintenance services (proactive and reactive)

Invoicing management

Marketing support

Overall, this equates to the most complete postal locker system and management service currently available to operators, and the one that provides their customers with the greatest flexibility for mail/parcel delivery and collection.

ByBox makes this possible because it understands that in the modern world, it is now as important to focus on moving data as on moving the mail itself. And that means focusing on putting the most flexible and comprehensive software at the heart of every postal locker network.

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## **2. Frustration increases over Truckee post office**

Truckee, Postal

By Greyson Howard

Sierra Sun, ghoward@sierrasun.com

April 6, 2008, 7:49 PM

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Service situation

At the April 3 Town Council meeting, Terry James, Truckee's acting postmaster, offered some solutions to the service issues currently plaguing the post office.

"We're going to have a customer appreciation day April 22, 23, and 24 where I will meet with anybody who has concerns," James said. "I've found that when I'm able to talk to customers directly we can solve a lot of issues."

Council member Richard Anderson questioned how much such an event would help.

"This seems like you are doing [public relations] for the community, but is the Postal Service doing anything in the way of quality control?" Anderson said.

James said she is also working internally to solve any problems she hears about.

The Postal Service will also limit parking in the downtown office's parking lot to 20 minutes, she said.

“It’s traumatizing seeing the parking lot full when nobody is inside picking up their mail, and it’s a liability issue too,” James said.

The Town of Truckee is enlisting help from higher up in the federal government as the U.S. Postal Service moves forward with its plans to move out of downtown.

The Postal Service first alerted the town of its intent to move both the downtown office and the Deerfield Drive office into a new, larger location in February. During a 30-day appeal period, the town submitted a request for at least one more public meeting, but did not hear back within the 15-day response time.

“I would characterize this process as a bureaucratic run around,” said Town Manager Tony Lashbrook at an April 3 town council meeting.

Postal officials are now seeking 2.5 to 3.5 acres of land, or a new building between 19,000 and 21,000 square feet in the Truckee area. Offers must be received by April 18, according to a Postal Service legal notice.

The speedy timeline would help insure the Postal Service retains funding for the project, which will lapse in September if property hasn’t been secured, said Garry Mattox, real estate specialist with the Postal Service at a previous meeting.

“This request isn’t consistent with what they told the town — they told us the funding would only be for an owned site, but the [request for proposals] said leased or owned,” Lashbrook said. “There are some discrepancies with their story.”

The town’s resistance to the change comes from a desire to maintain a post office presence downtown.

“It’s a key anchor tenant for downtown, the loss could have significant economic impacts, not to mention social impacts,” Lashbrook said.

Lashbrook said he believes if the Postal Service works with the town, a positive solution could be reached.

“If you don’t work with us, we will likely kill your project — that’s not meant to be a threat — I don’t think that’s a future any of us would look forward to,” Lashbrook said.

The town is also reaching out for help from the federal government, recently meeting with Congressman John Doolittle, and contacting Senator Barbara Boxer and Senator Dianne Feinstein.

“Senators Boxer and Feinstein have showed interest in this, they see this is a little town trying to maintain its economy and its character,” said Mayor Barbara Green. Nevada County Supervisor Ted Owens met with Doolittle last week.

“I feel the complaints people have, and the town having issues with the Postal Service blowing them off,” Owens said. “It’s good to air those with the congressman.”

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### **3. Many jobs to go at bankrupt postal group PIN**

Sun Apr 6, 2008 6:13am EDT

FRANKFURT, April 6 (Reuters) - Bankrupt German postal services group PIN, which once employed 11,500 staff, will lose more than one in two jobs, insolvency administrator Andreas Ringstmeier said on Saturday.

"Maybe at the end we'll have 5,000, if things go well," he told Reuters. "It was clear from the beginning that we would lose a lot of jobs but not that it would be so dramatic."

He said about 1,800 jobs had been secured so far.

Publisher Axel Springer (SPRGn.DE: Quote, Profile, Research), which bought PIN for 510 million euros (\$801 million) from Dutch mail group TNT (TNT.AS: Quote, Profile, Research) last year, called in the administrator, having decided it could not compete against German incumbent Deutsche Post (DPWGn.DE: Quote, Profile, Research) after a minimum wage was imposed on the sector.

Ringstmeister said a few of PIN's businesses had been closed down or sold off individually but expressed scepticism that the majority of the business would be sold to a single buyer. (Reporting by Alexander Huebner; Editing by Paul Bolding)

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### **4. Not just a post office**

Aromas residents protest plan for move to smaller quarters

By TOM RISEN

Special to The Herald

Article Last Updated: 04/07/2008 06:57:47 AM PDT

The Aromas Post Office serves as the social center in town. (ORVILLE MYERS/The Herald)

Addie Mellow checks the bulletin board outside the Aromas Post Office every day.

"It's like a Craigslist for the town," said Mellow, 50. "I get better results off here than the newspapers. I've rented property off here, I've bought a cat here ... the post office is the perfect spot for it since it's in the center of everything."

The post office is the social hub for the eclectic residents of Aromas. Especially after the popular Ducky Deli closed down a year ago, the post office is the place for them to see each other and catch up.

"This is where you find out who's getting married, who's having babies," said Mellow. "You don't get that at the restaurants here, probably because so many people eat in."

The U.S. Postal Service plans to move the post office to a smaller building because the rent at its current location will be raised from \$900 to \$3,600 in October, when the current lease runs out.

The current location at 386 Blohm Ave. has been the home of the town's post office for more than 110 years, said Aromas Postmaster Ray Furuta.

Although locals are upset, Gus Ruiz, spokesman for the postal service in the Bay Valley district, said the agency would rather move than buy the building, which is currently for sale for \$499,000.

"We are determined to, and will, find a new location for the post office in town," said Ruiz. "It will be a smaller facility but it will be a full retail location for stamps and packages."

The owner of the property at 386 Blohm Ave. said he would consider a month-to-month lease to the postal service if no new long-term lease has been negotiated by October.

"We've been in negotiations with the postal service, but they have stalled and the ball is in their court," said the owner, who agreed to discuss the issue only under the condition of anonymity. "The rent that we have been receiving from the post office the past 10 years is extremely poor. It's not a profit-generating investment; we'd be doing better in a savings bank. It's ridiculous."

Furuta said more than a third of the town's 3,000 residents have home delivery, unlike the homes and businesses downtown that rely on post office boxes.

If the post office were unable to deliver on its promise of a new location in Aromas, those relying on boxes would have to drive to Watsonville, where the mail carriers will work after the current location closes.

Several Aromas residents, like Linda Murdock, run their businesses from home. Murdock manufactures Happy Dog Food and relies on the convenient post office for shipping.

"It's almost like a ritual going to the post office," said Murdock. "It's the biggest presence of any state or federal office in town, so it's like a de facto city hall."

Murdock and an informal group of residents who are trying to keep the post office where it is arranged a town meeting with the postal service in March to discuss local confusion on whether they'd have to commute to get their mail.

"The postal service marketing representative confirmed the post office would move and was looking for a new location in town," said Murdock. "I'm not hopeful about it. There's been no word of negotiation for a new site since the property went on sale. This has happened to rural post offices across California since 2003. The postal service waits for a lease to run out and if a new location isn't found in town, they 'temporarily' provide postal services at another location. It's a slippery slope on how people lose their post offices."

Ruiz said that the postal service consolidates its services when a community is served by both a small outlet and a larger postal facility nearby.

"We don't do that haphazardly, there's oversight," said Ruiz. "It's almost like this situation, when we get forced out and have to determine what's the best business decision and also how we can still maintain the customer service people need."

Among the locals who remain skeptical is Juana Munoz, who owns Marshall's Market with her husband, Oscar.

"I don't know where they'd move it to," said Juana. "I think that's just an excuse to get people off their backs."

At Aromas Bible Church, which relies on the post office for its mail, Pastor Kevin Stottrup said he is concerned about how efficient a relocation will be. As it is, the location of Aromas can be confusing: The community is situated in three different counties.

"We're usually the least of the least of the least, being at the edge of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties," said Stottrup. "We're not usually a high-profile concern ... We'll adapt to smaller postal presence. The alternative, I guess is raising the price of postage and nobody wants that."

If a location in Aromas is not found, the rising price of gas would further complicate the commute for residents, particularly for low-income farmworkers in town.

Katie Stonebloom, an English teacher at Aromas Elementary School, between 40 and 50 percent of the school's students don't speak English and many are the children of migrant laborers.

"This would be a major inconvenience for them in particular," said Stonebloom. "They're already busy people, they have limited resources and limited transportation ability."

Ruiz said he wants to allay the town's concerns and said the postal service will preserve the postmaster and full postal rights even if a new location isn't found when the lease runs out.

"If it comes down to it, we will set up a portable postal unit so people will get the same service," he said.

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Star City

### **5. Because of an ambiguous postal law**

Most courier services doing business beyond their legal rights

Rizanuzzaman Laskar

Taking advantage of an ambiguous age-old postal law, most private courier services are doing business outside the purview of their legal rights.

They are carrying both personal and business letters -- a task that should be strictly and exclusively the responsibility of the government postal department, officials of the department said.

Courier service personnel who deliver letters to city households and offices hardly know that they are violating the law, The Post Office Act 1898.

Postal department officials said there is a difference between a 'letter' and any other 'document' and the postal department has the exclusive right to carry letters. Private couriers should therefore carry only 'documents'.

According to the section 4 in chapter 2 of the Post Office Act, the government has the exclusive privilege of conveying by post, from one place to another, all letters. The government will also have the exclusive privilege of performing all the incidental services of receiving, collecting, sending, dispatching and delivering all letters.

However, the law fails to make a clear distinction between a letter and other documents. Since no one knows the definitions, private couriers have exploited this ambiguity and begun carrying everything from bulky packages to small personal letters.

"Although the private couriers are being allowed to carry all sorts of objects including letters, it is actually going against the Post Office Act of 1898," said AKM Rafiqul Alam, additional director of the Postal Department.

According to sources at the Dhaka General Post Office (GPO), the postal-charge policy makes a distinction between a letter and other articles.

The postal department defines each article on the basis of its weight and charge the sender accordingly.

According to the policy, any article weighing 250 grams or less will be considered as a letter. Anything weighing more than the 250 grams will be regarded as a document, the sources said.

"Any article weighing 10 grams or below is considered as a standard letter. And anything weighing between 10 and 250 grams is considered as a special letter and the sender has to pay extra charge for it," said a GPO official.



The private courier services have different opinions regarding this matter. Some courier officials expressed ignorance about the Postal Act.

"I do not know if such a law exists but how come this is illegal as dozens of courier services including internationally renowned organisations are doing the same business," said Mostafizur Rahman from Korotowa Courier Service.

"It has been years since we started dealing with letters. How can it be termed as illegal all of a sudden," said an official of Sundarban Courier Service.

"There are thousands of courier services operating throughout the world who deliver letters. Do you think that they are all illegal?" he said.

But Kazi Syed Hossain Faruqi, marketing executive of DHL, said: "When it comes to letters we only carry business or official letters. We do not carry any personal letters, which would be against the postal law."

However, even postal officials admit that the private courier services have deservedly gained a solid reputation for their speedy and efficient services.

Majority of people prefer couriers as they find government postal services unreliable and inconvenient.

"Sending packages from one place to another always involves a lot of apprehension thanks to the unreliable mail delivery system of the postal department and the feeling of whether one will receive the mail or not in time," said Rafiuddin Ahmed, a courier user.

According to sources at the postal department, laws exist in other countries where only the postal department is allowed to carry letters.

"Many countries have adjusted their policies so that there is a harmony between the private couriers and the state-run postal service and no violation of laws. Our country is yet to take any such steps," said a GPO official.

The postal department has recently come up with a suggestion for an amendment to the law defining letters and documents.

"The idea is that all letters or documents weighing less than 250 grams will be carried exclusively by the postal department. Anything that weighs more than that will be free to be carried by anybody else," said AKM Rafiqul Alam.

According to him, the suggestion has already been sent to the ministry concerned. If everything goes according to plans, the Regulatory Reforms Commission will soon implement the adjusted policies.

## **6. Postal Service Again Vexes Penny Pinchers**

By PHYLLIS KORKKI

Published: April 6, 2008

A penny shouldn't matter that much. But when the price of a first-class postage stamp goes up that much, as it will on May 12, it is common to feel a gust of outrage (even though it is not too late to stock up on Forever stamps for 41 cents).

Richard Barry felt the same way in 1917, when the price of a postage stamp rose to 3 cents from 2 cents to help finance World War I. Writing in *The New York Times*, he acknowledged that the increase was, perhaps, a "trifling thing." Yet, he added, "Trifling things have upset nations, made poor men rich, pulled down kings and exalted beggars before now."

Price increases have been much more frequent since 1971, when the Postal Service became a quasi-governmental agency. They had little chance of slowing when the Postal Service stopped taking public subsidies in 1983.

Even so, the increases have not kept pace with inflation. If they had, a stamp that was 3 cents in 1917 would cost about 50 cents today.

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