

POSTAL NEWS

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1. New TNT air hub in Dubai

8 March 2011 - TNT Express has inaugurated its new air cargo handling facility at Dubai International Airport during a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority and Chairman of Dubai Airports. The new 2,500m² hub will allow TNT to process additional volumes of cargo with the benefit of close on site cooperation with both Dubai Police and Customs authorities. The opening is part of TNT's expansion in the Middle East, centred from its regional headquarters in Dubai, UAE. "TNT's volumes on our freight network between Europe and the UAE have grown by over 30 per cent in 2010 and the timing of expanding the hub was to allow us to further support and accelerate volume growth," said Bryan Moulds, Regional Managing Director for TNT Middle East said. "This is a complementary step in enhancing our connectivity in the Middle East, alongside investment in enhanced handling facilities in Dubai, Jebel Ali and our Middle East Road Network."

Night Star Express sees record 14% growth in volumes

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Tuesday, March 8th, 2011

2. German-based Night Star Express recorded a shipment growth of more than 14% for 2010.

The express specialist said it carried more than 4m items over the course of the year - a company record.

This rise in volumes follows on from strong growth reported over previous years, as the company strives to become a market leader, Night Star Express said.

Managing director Matthias Hohmann cited the "ever increasing demand for value-added after-sales logistics" as a key reason behind the company's success.

He added that Night Star Express was able to win new customers through its extensive coverage of different industries, the company's development of international relations, and its personalised Night Express service.

In order to grow further, Hohmann said that Night Star Express will now invest to increase capacity.

“For our customers, we are well established as a reliable business partner,” he said, adding that the company ensures that “high-quality services” remain “top priority”. With the launch of operations at Night Star Express’s new hub in Hünfeld last year, Hohmann said that necessary investments have been made to ensure top quality customer service.

He also revealed plans to open a new hub in Honold, Stuttgart, in early May, which will see existing capacities for the region double in size.

Hohmann added that a growth in volumes had come from the acquisition of new customers, as well as a rise in shipments from existing clients.

Looking forward to 2011, the managing director said that Night Star Express is looking “optimistically to the future”, with the business encouragingly looking to further develop its network.

This will provide a “sound basis to guide the business model of Night Star Express through 2011 successfully,” Hohmann concluded.

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3. Swedish Postal Service Unveiling Text Message Stamps

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By Leslie Horn

At least one country is making postage stamps a relic of the past. The Swedish postal service is ditching stamps in favor of a text message payment system.

After mobile users send a text, they will receive a reply that includes a code to be written on a piece of mail that will represent paid postage. It will work for packages weighing up to two kilograms.

"We're very interested and are just now looking into a solution," the postal service's head of marketing and development Anders Asberg told The Local, an English-language Swedish news site.

Denmark will unveil a similar system on April 1. There is no launch date for Sweden's SMS postage service, but Asberg said it "wouldn't be before the summer."

Postal services around the world have no doubt suffered as email, SMS, and social networking make communication faster and easier. Why send a letter when an email is fast, free, and paperless? But according to The Local, mail services in both Sweden and Denmark are counting on people continuing to use the dying communication form.

The U.S. Postal Service has continued to increase its rates over the past decade. It last increased stamp prices to \$0.44 in May of 2009. The USPS sought to increase the price again in January of 2011 to \$0.46, but it was denied the request. Asberg, however, said the new text message system will not affect postage prices in Sweden.

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4. Prime Vision collaborates to provide TNT web services

Prime Vision’s proven ability to engineer clean solutions, and to achieve them through close collaboration with many parties, made this OCR specialist and systems integrator the perfect choice for an ongoing project with TNT. Prime Vision has been engaged to provide web services, its first undertaking in the field, but one that is proving hugely successful.

Throughout the Netherlands, the new face of TNT Post Retail is visible in a range of high profile, high street businesses. It is now offering its services via in-store kiosks and business points and Prime Vision continues to provide all the software engineering involved.

“To achieve the best outcome for TNT we worked closely with several other companies and in particular with the designer of the GUI services, Acato, and the Australian provider of the in-store terminals, Hytech,” explained Prime Vision’s project manager, Pim Struik. “A key requirement was to make the chosen service simple to execute, even by minimally trained Saturday staff.”

The lion’s share of the transactions, in the region of 75 percent, are currently centred on vehicle and boat registration but the web-services also include fishing license application, retail gift cards for spending in stores and pre-paid phone cards.

Flexibility is the crucial benefit of the Prime Vision design as it will enable further services to be added. One that is about to come on-stream, and for which Prime Vision has developed the relevant software, will allow in-store visitors to register and log in securely in order to view their medical records.

DHL steps into the fast lane with IndyCar link-up

Tuesday, March 8th, 2011

4. Staff and guests at DHL’s regional headquarters in Plantation, Florida, took a first look at the new Andretti Autosport IndyCar today.

The DHL-branded vehicle was unveiled at a special ceremony celebrating the logistics company’s deal to become co-primary sponsor for the team for the 2011 IZOD IndyCar motor racing series and future championships.

The #28 car, set to be driven in the racing series by Ryan Hunter-Reay, bears the red-and-yellow branding of DHL, which is the official shipping and logistics provider for Andretti Autosport after signing a multi-year sponsorship deal last month.

Hunter-Reay, who won last year’s Long Beach Grand Prix in his first year with the team, and team owner Michael Andretti were on hand to meet with DHL employees and guests, sign autographs and show off the new 3.5-litre V8 today at the DHL campus.

The vehicle can achieve a maximum speed of about 240mph and accelerate from zero to 100mph in 4.5 seconds.

DHL said it was a “true representation of the attributes that DHL and Andretti Autosport live and breathe every day”.

The company will also be sponsoring the car driven by the team’s newest member, Mike Conway, who was signed on February 1.

Christine Nashick, vice president of marketing at DHL Express US, said: “The speed, reliability and dedication exemplified by Andretti Autosport, Ryan Hunter-Reay and the DHL IndyCar team are truly an ideal fit with DHL.”

The IndyCar series officially gets underway in Florida later this month, with the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg on Sunday, March 27.

As part of its sponsorship, DHL will have VIP hospitality platforms at events, image and advertising rights and the opportunity to provide shipping and logistics services to support Andretti Autosport’s global operations.

5. Future For Post Offices - The Sunday Piece

05 March 2011 - Steve Lawson

Normally the Hellmail 'Sunday Piece' is a more laid-back affair but this has been a turbulent week. I found it interesting that following the announcement that Post Office Ltd had lost the Green Giro payment scheme to PayPoint, the government rather quickly announced (the following day in fact) that there are plans in the pipeline to boost business at post offices with a £73m Credit Union investment.

Recent suggestions in the press and by other organisations that the scheme constituted around a third of most subpostmasters income, appears to be misleading. This figure applies to work handling mail on behalf of the Royal Mail and not the Green Giro payment scheme used for emergency benefit payments and other one-off payments for people without a bank account or a Post Office Card Account. It is this that is being replaced with the Simple Money Transmission Service (SMoTS) via PayPoint. It remains to be seen whether it can actually deliver.

The business carried out between Royal Mail and Post Office Ltd, is not under threat according to Royal Mail chief executive Moya Greene although there are many that insist without a formal contract ahead of privatisation and the proposed split, Royal Mail could seek cheaper options in the longer term. The government argued that imposing such a strict arrangement would deter investors but there remains a very real concern that without concrete proposals for a guaranteed level of business, the network could shrink further.

Not so long ago, my local post office put up a determined fight (when the Department for Work and Pensions insisted everyone collecting pensions and other benefits from Post Offices had to switch to direct payments) with a large notice across its counters, pointing out that the switch was not actually compulsory and pensioners could in fact continue to collect their pensions over the counter if they wanted to. To a large extent pensioners were bamboozled by it all, many feeling that they simply had no choice and it was certainly implied (at the time) that armies of pensioners were actually clamouring to switch. I have to say, that was not the impression I had on a local level with many extremely upset and confused by it all. It is undeniably a costly operation compared to modern methods and in the end the government departments won on this, the final lever being the need to reduce the national debt.

Most subpostmasters will tell you that it isn't just the loss of the contract but the subsidiary purchases that go with it. In smaller communities, regular visitors to the post office often visit nearby shops too and you only have to look at small shopping areas that have lost post offices to see the many businesses that closed as a result. Many remain boarded up today, becoming ghost towns, forcing more and more of us to the might of the big supermarket boys.

We are seeing a decline in many traditional postal services with stamped mail declining and other services being paid for online, but policy seems to be speeding up that decline at an alarming rate and there has been little vision from anyone outside the National Federation of Subpostmasters to help strengthen their role. No shortage of ideas on how to cut or close things but vision, no.

I still feel that the tie-in with Royal Mail is not as good for Post Office Ltd as it might appear and that small business and domestic customers are being short-changed by postal liberalisation, effectively paying more for significantly less whilst large companies pocket the savings. If we are to have a truly competitive market, subpostmasters should have the freedom to operate as despatch and collection points for several operators - not just Royal Mail or Parcel Force. There are still even now, tight restrictions on what small post offices are allowed to offer in terms of services and that needs to be addressed.

We can only hope that the splitting of Post Office Ltd from Royal Mail (as part of the future privatisation plans) will finally give those running post offices far more commercial freedom - if it has not been left too late already.

One of the things we'll be looking at over the coming weeks is the impact that these changes will have on an already sparse post office network, which ideas fell by the wayside along the way (the 'Peoples Bank' for one) and what is really needed to help protect post offices in the longer term or whether their days really are numbered in a digital world.

We'll be talking to subpostmasters and industry practitioners about what the future holds for post offices. Do get in touch if you feel you would like to contribute.

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