

USPS: Marketing Disconnect

Have you seen the latest USPS ad campaign? It says that you can send anything that fits in a box, anywhere in the country for a flat fee. Fabulous USP. Great deal. Easy.

But, and here is the rub, you have to deal with the post office unless your handy dandy mail carrier comes by to pick up your packages. Folks who don't work in offices or who work out of home actually have to make the trek down to the post office. And guess what, at the post office you are going to have to wait. And wait. And wait some more.

I was at the post office today. There were at least 10 people in line. And only two clerks were working. The supervisor was not working. And one of the clerks was trying to get people to use the automated machine, with her help, which sort of defeats the purpose of AUTOMATION. At one point, only one clerk was helping customers. All I needed was one international stamp, for which I wanted to pay cash. I was frustrated but realized this is the perfect example of marketing disconnect.

What is marketing disconnect? It is when the marketing does not match the product. Let's say you see a gorgeous ad for a luscious chocolate shake. You go buy it, and the product you get is far from luscious, in fact, it tastes more like talcum powder than chocolate. That is marketing disconnect. What happens is that you will never buy that product again. And heck, you may stop trusting advertising altogether.

Same here. Why would you want to continue dealing with the post office if you don't have to? Which, is probably why more and more people are paying bills on line. The USPS is hurting. In fact, they are thinking of closing branches (which of course means that you will have longer waits because more people have fewer places to go). I felt bad for them until

today. The USPS is often a model of inefficiency, when it comes to customer service. I think the back end people and the letter carriers do a tremendous job.

For marketing to continue working, operations and products need to be in line with the offering. In this case, if the post office wants to boost the sales of the flat fee packages it must also do something about the customer service experience in its offices.