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Monitoring the Postal Service, Private Carriers and Suppliers

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Texas Areas Affected by Hurricane Harvey

The USPS announced on Aug. 31 that Hurricane Harvey's impact on the Gulf Coast resulted in the temporary suspension of mail delivery service, as well as the closure of some postal facilities in the Houston and San Antonio areas. The USPS Houston District and Rio Grande District provided additional information on how customers displaced by Hurricane Harvey could retrieve Treasury checks they receive via U.S. Mail, including checks from the Social Security Administration, Veterans Administration (VA), the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the Railroad Retirement Board. In addition, the USPS will distribute any identifiable medications sent through the mail.

The USPS provided a list of locations, by ZIP Code, where checks will be made available for pickup. Customers can locate the five-digit ZIP Code to

find the nearest Post Office location which will have checks available, beginning September 1. Customers may pick-up checks at any location between the hours of 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m., Monday–Sunday.

Customers, in order to retrieve their check, must provide proper ID. In addition to retrieving checks, customers can also complete a Change of Address (COA) request, especially if they expect to be out of their homes for an extended period.

As conditions improve, the USPS will provide additional information on restoration of mail service throughout the Houston and San Antonio areas, including resumption of delivery and reopening of Post Offices. Customers can call 1-800-ASK-USPS (1-800-275-8777) to obtain information, including available, alternate Post Office retail locations, or check the Postal Service website: www.usps.com. The Post Office is always open at www.usps.com.

Top Honors to Amazon

Amazon was the top-ranked retailer on the *Internet Retailer* Mobile Performance Index for July, a program that monitors mobile website performance according to Digital Commerce 360. Groupon, Home Depot, and Toys R Us also finished in the top ten.

Walgreen's fell out of the top ten site performers in the index after holding the No. 1 overall ranking on the list for the month of June. The mobile websites for retailers on *Internet Retailer*'s Top 100 list averaged 99.48% availability from July 4-18 compared with 99.80% availability June 5-18.

Data from Catchpoint Systems is used to perform the rankings. The company monitors webpage load time, availability, number of hosts, and number of items per page. The measurements are taken from in-country or in-region monitoring nodes

on major Internet backbones, at intervals of five minutes for two weeks each month.

Amazon's positioning is attributed to the success of its July 11 Prime Day sale. During July, Amazon's mobile site loaded, on average, in 1.31 seconds, slightly better than the 1.35 seconds measured by Catchpoint in June. Amazon's site traffic also visibly increased on Prime Day, July 11, by 49.1 compared to that same day the previous week.

Site speed matters. As *Retail Dive* explains: "Somehow, the spike didn't drastically affect Amazon's average mobile site load time, even though the site's average number of hosts—28—and items—98—were higher than many sites that made the top 10." <http://www.retaildive.com/news/index-amazon-leads-mobile-site-performance-in-july/503940/>.

Target Achieved

Target's better-than-expected performance in its Q2/FY 2017 currently has its strategies under analysts' review. As described by *RIS News*: "Target's digital sales skyrocketed to 32%, on top of 16% growth last year. The compounding of these two growth rates represents more than a 50% growth rate compared with two years ago. The company also said its guest

contacts per digital order are running 30% lower than last year. Target attributed the meaningful declines in guest contact center activity to efforts to reduce friction and increase the reliability of digital operations. . . . The retailer also saw store traffic increase more than 2%, which was much stronger than Target's expectations. The

(Continued on Page 3)

Short Takes

Retail Dive reports that Amazon may not yet control the retail universe. “Moody’s analysts led by Charles O’Shea tackled some widespread assumptions about the e-commerce giant’s place in the world in a recent report emailed to *Retail Dive*. Amazon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.”

One of the points made is that retail is a bigger industry than Amazon can command. As the article explains: “Analysts with the bond rating agency noted that, though Amazon dominates online sales, those sales account for just 10% of the industry as a whole. As for its recent acquisition of Whole Foods, the analysts wrote, ‘We believe it’s a big stretch to say—as many in the market have been doing—that Amazon will dominate food retail, and some have said this will happen within two years.’ They pointed out that Amazon, even now with Whole Foods in the fold, controls only a \$20 billion piece of an \$800 billion market for food sales in the U.S.”

For further insights, read the entire article at <http://www.retaildive.com/news/moodys-amazon-still-far-from-ruling-retail/503992/>.

Amazon may not control the retail universe, but its activities often direct the day’s news coverage for the industry. The acquisition of Whole Foods attracted attention on August 28 when Amazon took immediate action to signal its ownership.

Amazon lowered some prices right away and indicated it will help Whole Foods improve its logistics and merchandising, allowing it to offer even lower prices on more items. Bananas, avocados, and salmon saw immediate cuts.

The company also plans to make Prime Whole Foods’ customer rewards program. Making lower prices at Whole Foods an additional perk of Prime membership should boost traffic and help sales. About 62% of Whole Foods shoppers already have a Prime account, according to a survey by Morgan Stanley.

Amazon plans to install its lockers in select locations, allowing shoppers to receive and return Amazon orders at Whole Foods stores.

Whole Foods’ private labels will be sold through *Amazon.com*, *AmazonFresh*, Prime Pantry, and Prime

Now. Amazon has already been building out its food offerings with the introduction of Amazon Meal Kits alongside *AmazonFresh*. Whole Foods’ labels like 365 Everyday Value could help Amazon build demand for its grocery delivery service. <http://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-acts-quickly-on-whole-foods-2017-8>.

Amazon Books opened its eleventh store last month, and its second in New York City. Its newest location is directly across the street from the Empire State Building. The store offers some 3700 titles from bestsellers to rising titles. The store measures books’ popularity by five-star ratings on its website. Books in 34th St. store, Amazon said, have earned a total of 1.8 million five-star reviews.

Amazon opened three stores last month, including stores in Bellevue, Wash., and San Jose, Calif. Coming soon will be stores in Walnut Creek and Los Angeles, Cal. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/74659-amazon-books-plans-more-stores-in-2018>.

Amazon has expanded its Influencer Program, offered in pilot form back in late March, to include a self-service tool for YouTube stars to enter the vetting process, per reporting from *TechCrunch*. <http://www.marketingdive.com/news/amazon-expands-influencer-program-to-court-youtube-talent/503644/>.

Predictions about Amazon’s next acquisition are circulating. Foursquare has speculated “that Amazon may be interested in home improvement retailer Lowe’s, that Walmart may be after Ulta Beauty and that both might want to absorb Warby Parker or Nordstrom. The Seattle-based department store retailer, well versed in both e-commerce and retail innovation, is already mulling a Wall Street exit, and could be primed for a takeover. Walmart declined to comment on the speculation, and Amazon and Nordstrom didn’t immediately return *Retail Dive*’s request for comment.” <http://www.retaildive.com/news/is-nordstrom-the-next-acquisition-target-for-walmart-or-amazon/503535/>.

Target Achieved... (cont. from page 1)

strength was broad-based across the country, across categories and across channels."

Target explained its success by pointing to its efforts "to create a stable digital platform and successful collaboration between our digital operations and merchandising teams to create a more cohesive experience for our guests," said CEO Brian Cornell. Target also took on a new Executive Vice President, Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer. However, Minsok Pak has yet to start the job even though chief innovation and strategy officer Casey Carl left the company earlier this year.

Analysts give the company credit for adopting several new fulfillment strategies.

Target Restock

Target Restock is the company's next-day delivery service that seeks to keep customers' households stocked with everyday essentials. The success of the program is offered as the reason why, in August, Target expanded it to the Dallas-Fort Worth, Tex., and Denver, Colo., markets. Target will offer the program in seven more markets before the holidays.

"With Restock available in these 10 markets we will already be reaching one quarter of the U.S. market less than six months from the day we launched the test," said COO John Mulligan.

According to Target's website: "choose from over 15,000 popular household essentials," "add the things you need to your Restock box (up to 45 pounds)," and "we deliver [your] order by 2pm Mon-Fri & get it delivered next day for just \$4.99."

To be clear, the service is about sending a box: "Target Restock works a bit differently than any other next-day shipping service you've probably ever used. Instead of selecting just individual items and requesting them be sent, you get a box. Not a box of that item, but a box full of whatever products you can fit inside of it, and then that whole box is delivered the following business day for a flat fee of \$4.99. So, since the fee is the same whether you buy a single bottle of laundry detergent or an entire box of stuff full of snacks, cat litter, cereal, toilet paper, and whatever else, it actually ends up being a pretty reasonable stand-in for a trip to the store. That is, unless you really only need one thing, in which case it might not even be worth it." <http://bgr.com/2017/06/28/target-restock-trial-amazon/>.

It would appear though that the company's website worked well, contributing to the program's appeal. In the *St. Cloud Times*, one user explained how it worked: "I ordered 18 items in total, filling 80 percent of my virtual

box. The items represented goods that any family might run out of during the middle of a busy work week. Filling my virtual box was simple. Every time I added an item, a tracker in the upper right-hand corner of the website showed me what percentage of the box was filled. The program limits each box to no more than 45 pounds, but it was clear that product dimensions were just as important. When I added single rolls of paper towels, each one took up 4 percent of my package, while a 20-count package of Duracel AA batteries took up just 2.7 percent." Chief issues were lack of choices of some brands, items (soda), and cancellation of some items between order acceptance and delivery (Band-aids). <http://www.sctimes.com/story/money/2017/06/30/heres-what-we-learned-when-we-tried-restock/443429001/>.

After testing in Minneapolis, Target is now making Saturday deliveries and has opened the test to all shoppers versus just Target REDcard holders. Target plans to move the cut off for next-day delivery later in the day and said it will increase marketing in Restock markets.

Does Target Restock explain the improved performance? It is difficult to treat it as the explanation. As said on the company's website: the Minneapolis pilot of Target Restock available to Target REDcard holders began June 27, 2017. <https://corporate.target.com/article/2017/06/twin-cities-pilot-restock>.

The offering seems too new and was too limited to explain what happened in the last year.

Curbside Fulfillment

Target recently tested curbside fulfillment during the second and third quarters. Curbside fulfillment applies to approximately 180,000 shelf stable items currently eligible for in-store pickup and allows shoppers to remain in their cars when picking up items. The new test uses Target's own team members and internally developed technology, rather than a third-party service.

Again, the program seems too new to explain Target's improved statistics. It does show promise. Third-party services have been engaging successfully with customers and claim that store pick-up, rather than faster delivery, is the way to advance sales. In an L2 interview with Curbside Founder and CEO Jaron Waldman, Waldman explained why he "believes the friction point in mobile and online commerce will be solved with efficient in-store pickup options rather than faster shipping options."

It appears though that the friction point exists

because too few retailers have click and collect services and not because of data that customers want that more than home delivery: "Just 32% of evolved retailers in L2's Pureplay study offer click-and-collect services. And less than half make the inventory of their stores visible in real time. Even programs like Walmart's grocery pickup and Nordstrom's curbside delivery by text have not expanded beyond pilot areas."

What made more sense in the article was that click and collect is cheaper than home delivery, making its appeal broader: "'For those who want to pay \$15 or \$20 to get their items the same day, sure. But for most of America, adding \$5 to \$10 to every order has consequences,' Waldman says. And since most of Americans drive, same day pickup at the store is an effective solution. Placing an order and picking it up on the way home can save a lot of time, eliminating the need to browse, park, and stand in crowds.' <https://www.l2inc.com/daily-insights/curbside-offers-better-fulfillment-with-in-store-pickup>.

Ironically, Target tested curbside pick-up using Curbside's services back in 2015 and abandoned the program after the pilot. <http://www.ficeretail.com/operations/target-shutting-down-curbside-pickup>.

In-Store Pick-up

Target has expanded in-store pickup capabilities and sped up shipping times from stores and distribution facilities via third-party providers. Unlike the previously discussed explanations for Target's recent successes, both of which involved new tests, in-store pick-up volume has grown more than 30% through the first half of the year above 2016 and in July Target saw more than 40% growth.

The Target website explains the service as follows: "Our Order Pickup service allows you to order items from *Target.com* and pick them up at your local Target store. To see if an item is eligible for Order Pickup, look for free ship to store or free order pickup when adding the item to your cart. You can also shop from a list of Order Pickup eligible items by browsing any category and selecting buy online & pick up from the availability drop down.

To place an order using Order Pickup:

1. Find an Order Pickup eligible item and select color, size and quantity (if applicable).
2. Select a store for pickup. If the store listed doesn't have the item available or you want to pick up at another

Fulfilling Mall Space

When malls close and property owners devise new uses for the property, one potential ally is the business that helped put the mall out of business. Amazon is building a fulfillment center on the site last occupied by

location, select find at another store. Select pick up here or ship it here next to a store location, or search for additional stores using a ZIP code or City and State.

3. Proceed to checkout and submit order.
4. Wait until you receive a pickup notification email before you go to the store to pick up your item.
5. Visit Guest Services or the designated pickup location at your selected store to get your item(s). Pickup location details will be included in your confirmation email." <http://help.target.com/help/TargetGuestHelpArticleDetail?articleId=ka41Y0000001L3wQAE&articleTitle=What+is+Order+Pickup%3F>.

Target says it is investing in system enhancements and store labor hours as more shoppers choose order pick-up. Target has already tested its program through the 2016 holidays, a sign that it is ready for the upcoming holidays. Its website explains: "We're making it easier: In 325 stores nationwide, we're making it easier than ever to spot designated Target team members who can help with your orders. Those team members will sport white 'Order Pickup' t-shirts and offer Order Pickup reusable bags that you can use throughout the holiday season and beyond. The goal? Make your Order Pickup in-store experience as quick and efficient as possible."

The program has merchandise ready swiftly—more than 90% are ready in one hour. Testing of store layouts and technology has contributed to improved efficiency.

This program sounds like a winner for Target.

Shipping

Target's readiness for stores to ship digital orders directly to shoppers began two years ago, but the retailer sees growth spurts in this method. According to *RIS News*, "For the first half of the year ship from store sales accounted for more than 40% of digital units shipped. In the fall Target plans to roll the capability out to an additional 350 stores in advance of the holiday season, bringing the total number of ship from store locations to more than 1,400 locations." <https://risnews.com/5-ways-target-revolutionizing-fulfillment>.

Target's multi-layered approach to the need for faster service, should keep it growing.

Mall Space

the Randall Park Mall, once the largest in America, which closed after retail sales started moving online.

The residents of Randall Park, Ohio are reconciled to the news. Amazon reports the center means

about 2000 new jobs “with benefits and opportunities to engage with Amazon Robotics in a highly technological workplace.” While retail jobs rarely raise issues of dismal working conditions like those attributed to Amazon, local business leaders are happy to see the center move into what was once a source of jobs and sales tax revenues.

The new warehouse will cover 855,000 square feet. Amazon says workers there “will pick, pack and ship smaller customer items such as electronics, toys and books.” The mall closed in 2009 and was demolished in

2014, leaving behind a scar and memories.

The memories included a thriving shopping center that survived for about thirty years, a place photographers visited to record the deterioration, and the vacant site following demolition.

Amazon projects it will cost \$177 million to build the new fulfillment center. <http://gizmodo.com/amazon-is-building-a-colossal-warehouse-where-americas-1798441983>.

California’s Self-Driving Cars

Nearly forty companies are legally testing self-driving cars in California. The California Department of Motor Vehicles has welcomed many of the key players in this new technology. Samsung recently won permission to do its own testing and position itself to keep up with rivals like Google and Apple.

Samsung plans to test a Toyota Prius and two Audi A3s, according to an agency spokesperson cited by *The Financial Times*. Samsung developed its models after acquiring automotive supplier Harman International for \$8 billion in March 2017. It began testing in South Korea that same month.

Business Insider lists the following companies testing driverless cars in California:

Volkswagen Group of America

Mercedes Benz

Waymo

Delphi Automotive

Tesla Motors

Bosch

Nissan

GM Cruise LLC

BMW

Honda

Ford

Zoox, Inc.

Drive.ai, Inc.

Faraday & Future Inc.

Baidu USA LLC

Wheego Electric Cars Inc.

Valeo North America, Inc.

NextEV USA, Inc.

Telenav, Inc.

NVIDIA Corporation

AutoX Technologies Inc.

Subaru

Udacity, Inc.

Navya Inc.

Renovo.auto

UATC LLC (Uber)

PlusAI Inc

Nuro, Inc

CarOne LLC

Apple Inc.

Bauer’s Intelligent Transportation

Pony.AI

TuSimple

Jingchi Corp

SAIC Innovation Center, LLC

Almotive Inc.

Aurora Innovation

Nullmax

Samsung Electronic

<http://www.businessinsider.com/dozens-of-companies-testing-self-driving-cars-on-californian-roads-2017-9>.

Drone Delivery Contest

JD.com has offered a \$15 million prize for the winners of a drone delivery contest in China. Its goal is to improve its current drone delivery service, the *South China Morning Post* reports.

Participants must design a solution to make widespread drone delivery. Presumably the winning design will help *JD.com* further its own plans for drone delivery. Drone delivery in China focuses today more on reaching

rural areas than on business-to-consumer delivery. Difficult roads currently make traditional shipping costly. At the same time, drone delivery service in larger cities presents new logistical issues as the drones must avoid tall buildings.

According to *Business Insider*: “The online retailer wants to be seen as China’s leader in fast delivery, and a more expansive drone delivery net-

work may help it achieve this. It already has a network of more than 250 warehouses and 7000 pick-up locations, and its CEO stated its drones cut delivery costs to less than \$1 per shipment, as well as reduced delivery times from hours to twenty minutes. If *JD.com* is able to expand its drone delivery capabilities to the country's larger cities—there are more than 40 million residents of Beijing and Shanghai combined—it may be able to grab

Readyng Same-Day Holiday Deliveries

Heavyweight retailers are expanding their same-day delivery zones in anticipation of holiday shoppers' rising demand for fast-delivered goods. Even smaller, niche retailers, like PetSmart, are doing the same. Delivery company Deliv is one beneficiary of this trend.

By press releases, Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Best Buy have announced plans to extend their same-day delivery reach through arrangements with Deliv.

Macy's

Macy's charges \$8 for same-day deliveries placed by 1 p.m. with a minimum order of \$99. It will add fifteen cities, bringing the total to thirty-three, for same-day delivery. New cities will include: Austin, Tex.; Charlotte, N.C.; Cincinnati; Columbus, Ohio; Denver, Colo.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Kansas City, Mo.; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.; Orlando, Fla.; Phoenix, Ariz.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Sacramento, Cal.; San Antonio, Tex.; San Diego, Cal.; and Tampa, Fla.

Bloomingdale's

The fee for same-day delivery service is \$8 for all online purchases that meet Bloomingdale's (\$150) free shipping threshold and \$8 plus standard shipping costs for anything less. Same-day delivery is always \$8 for customers belonging to Bloomingdale's Loyallist program. Bloomingdale's will offer same-day deliveries in two more cities: Orlando, Fla.; and San Diego, Cal. "At Macy's and Bloomingdale's every experience matters and we are thrilled to offer same-day delivery service to our customers," said Scott Prieto, executive vice president of Macy's Logistics and Operations. "We are dedicated to ensuring that whenever, wherever and however our customer chooses to shop, their experience is seamless and convenient. We're excited that we can leverage the stores we have as fulfillment centers to power same-day delivery, closing the gap between customers and products for more of our shoppers just in time for the holidays." <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170831005233/en/Macy%20Expands-Same-Day-Delivery-Service-Cover-33>.

more market share from Alibaba, which it has been steadily chipping away at since 2014."

To learn more, read the report prepared by Jonathan Camhi, research analyst for *BI Intelligence*, *Business Insider's* premium research service. . <http://www.businessinsider.com/jdcom-offers-15-million-prize-for-drone-delivery-contest-2017-9>.

Best Buy

Best Buy will increase its same-day delivery service from thirteen to twenty-seven markets within the month. By holiday season, it plans to expand the service to forty cities. It will use two services, including Deliv. The price for this service will drop from \$14.99 to \$5.99 per order. Customers must submit orders by 3 p.m.

PetSmart

PetSmart.com also is working with Deliv to offer same-day delivery in thirty-three cities. The tally includes fourteen new cities: Austin, Tex.; Charlotte, N.C.; Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio; Denver, Colo.; Kansas City, Mo.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Orlando, Fla.; Phoenix, Ariz.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Sacramento, Cal.; San Antonio, Tex.; San Diego, Cal.; and Tampa, Fla.

PetSmart customers can shop online and select scheduled delivery on the product page for anything from fifty-pound bags of dog food to bulky containers of cat litter. Delivery can be set within a few hours of purchase and up to two days later. Orders must be placed by noon to receive products by 8 p.m. on the same day. <https://globenewswire.com/news-release/2017/08/31/1106012/0/en/PetSmart-com-and-Deliv-Expand-Same-Day-Scheduled-Delivery-Offering-From-19-to-33-Metro-Markets-Across-the-Country.html>.

Keeping Pace

The retailers need to pick up the pace to keep up with competitor Amazon. Amazon's Prime Now service is available in thirty-two major cities. It has plans to add speedy delivery of alcohol, which already is available in twelve cities.

Use of a company like Deliv is assisting some major retailers' efforts to close the gap to Amazon. Other retailers have acquired third-party providers to do the same. Target recently acquired Grand Junction, a San Francisco-based transportation tech company to improve and expand its own delivery capabilities. <http://www.retaildive.com/news/macy-s-best-buy-expand-same-day-delivery-ahead-of-holidays/503993/>; (see *BMR* 08/28/2017, p. 8).

Deliv Will Expand to 1400 Cities

Not surprisingly after the foregoing report, Deliv, a “crowdsourced” same-day delivery startup that currently serves about 4000 retailers has expanded its service to thirty-three markets and 1400 cities. It previously operated in nineteen markets.

The expansion means that Deliv and Amazon Prime Now are set to compete in the same markets. Prime Now is one of the ecommerce giant’s perks for subscribers—and a stumbling block for other retailers seeking to compete more effectively with it.

Some of Amazon’s competitors have joined it rather than suffer in competition with it. They may sell items through Amazon’s marketplace to make use of Amazon’s platform, fulfillment, and logistics infrastructure to store, distribute, and deliver those purchased goods. However, this often means bowing to Amazon’s policies and, of course, paying fees for its services.

Deliv offers another route to swift delivery demands from customers. “Same day delivery is

quickly becoming table stakes across every retail segment. With Deliv, retailers can offer their customers that same exceptional level customer experience without the need to invest in their own asset-based delivery fleet,” said Daphne Carmeli, CEO and founder of Deliv, in a statement. “As retailers look to offer a consistent experience nationwide, they need a proven, trusted, national partner. Our expansion offers them the speed, flexibility, and broad national footprint needed to compete with the ever-growing force of Amazon.”

Deliv already serves businesses including Best Buy, Bloomingdale’s, BloomThat, Fry’s Electronics, K&L Wine Merchants, Office Depot, PetSmart, Macy’s, Plated, and The UPS Store.

UPS has helped fund the last-mile delivery service. <https://techcrunch.com/2017/08/31/same-day-delivery-startup-deliv-expands-to-1400-cities-rivalling-amazons-prime-now/>.

Mail Anywhere

The USPS offers the Mail Anywhere program to Full-Service customers, allowing them to use a single permit to present Full-Service or mixed Full-Service mailings at any Business Mail Acceptance site. The program appeals to business mailers because it simplifies permit management and reduces permit application and renewal fees for customers who mail at numerous locations.

Eligibility

The eligibility requirements for Mail Anywhere are:

- Customers must mail at 90% or higher Full-Service levels for the customer’s given business location
- Customers must meet the electronic Full-Service verification criteria during the month prior to their request to participate in Mail Anywhere
- Mailpieces must be Full-Service First-Class Mail (Cards, Letters and Flats only); USPS Marketing Mail (Letters and Flats only, including Nonprofit); Bound Printed Matter (Flats only); and Periodicals (Letters and Flats only)
- Permit types that are eligible include Permit Imprint; Pre-canceled Stamps and Metered. A variety of postage statement types are also supported in Mail Anywhere, including Single Permit; Combined Mail; Comail; Mixed-Class Comail, and Copal
- Mailers may submit their electronic data via Mail.dat, Mail.XM, Postal Wizard (First-Class and USPS Marketing Mail only, and Full-Service only); or IMsb

(First-Class and USPS Marketing Mail Only).

Application

Application must be made by the party that prepares the mail. This could be the mail’s owner or a third-party mail service provider. Applications are made to the PostalOne! Help Desk.

The applicant must satisfy certain mail preparation tests. The best way to establish this level of accuracy is to access the Mailer Scorecard data to review both the Full-Service mail volumes for the prior month(s), as well as to verify that none of the error thresholds for the electronic verification have been exceeded during that time.

Application can be made by an email sent to the PostalOne! Help Desk at postalone@usps.gov. The email should state the following:

- Request for Mail Anywhere participation
 - Preparer’s Customer Registration ID (CRID) for the location where the mail is prepared (if multiple preparation locations will be used, supply the CRID for each location)
 - Preparer’s Contact Name, Company Name, Business Address, City, State, and ZIP Code
 - Mail owner’s permit numbers and BMEU’s City, State, and ZIP Code where the permit was opened
 - Postal Facilities at which mail will be dropped
 - Permit numbers to be consolidated
 - Any permit changes.
- Interested mailers might also be helpful to take one of the webinars hosted by Window Book.

Briefs

Cars that do not require a driver for some or all functions are already in trial in other parts of the world. *Business Insider Intelligence*'s VP of Research, Barbara Peng, will moderate two panels on self-driving cars and vehicles-as-a-service at Mobile World Congress Americas, which takes place in San Francisco from Sept. 12 to 14, 2017. Read more about it in the Aug. 31, 2017 *BI Intelligence Daily* newsletter.

Ryan Cote at Ballantine recently made a pitch for direct mail in the company's blog: "77% of people sort through the mail they receive at home and 98% of Americans check their mail every day. In other words, direct mail provides you with a consistent means of reaching your target audience and getting your name and brand in front of their eyes. Given the amount of mail customers receive each day, however, finding ways to stand out from the crowd is key to success during the holidays. Creating direct mail that employs the recipient's five senses provides you with a great way to make an impression." <https://www.ballantine.com/how-to-capture-the-5-senses-with-direct-mail-infographic>.

Key Food Montague, a cooperative grocer in Brooklyn Heights, NY, has become home to new cashless self-checkout systems supplied by Toshiba Global Commerce Solutions and STCR, a provider of business systems to grocery retailers, according to a press release. The company uses four of Toshiba's Self Checkout System 6 units in four self-checkout lanes positioned in the center of the store.

Self-checkout saves on store labor productivity and resource utilization, which can cost 20% to 30%

of the payroll in retail, according to the companies. Already the new lanes are handling about 20% of customers. The system's supplier estimates that retailers today can realize a return on their investment costs in less than eighteen months.

According to *Retail Dive*, "One of the things that Key Food Montague did differently than most is placing cashless self-checkout terminals in the center of the store, rather than the traditional location at the front of the store near exits. It's an interesting move because, as noted in the press release, that's where the foot traffic is as people shop. Having a checkout in the middle of the store makes quite a bit of sense if you are a shopper that needs to quickly grab a few things, get through the checkout line as quickly as possible and head out." <http://www.retaildive.com/news/cashless-self-checkout-takes-center-store-in-ny-grocery/504048/>.

Amazon and Microsoft have answered the news that Walmart and Google will work together on a plan for placing orders by voice by announcing they are working together on voice-activated tools. (See *BMR* 08/28/2017, p. 4.) Amazon's Alexa and Microsoft's Cortana, will talk to each other, a press release said. Amazon customers will be able to use their Echo speakers to reach Microsoft's digital assistant by saying, "Alexa, open Cortana." They will be able to access work calendars or book a meeting in Microsoft's Outlook. Windows 10 users will be able to say, "Cortana, open Alexa" to control smart-home devices, shop on Amazon or use the more than 20,000 skills built by third-party developers. <http://www.mobilemarketeer.com/news/amazons-alexa-will-soon-talk-with-microsofts-cortana/503937/>.

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