

Your Postal Podcast 30th Edition Transcript

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Richard Watkins: Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins with the Postal Service's Office of Corporate Communications. In this edition, you'll hear from a man who's literally "cracked the code," ZIP Codes, that is. And you'll discover how some Texas entrepreneurs have connected handwritten thank you notes to the digital age.

ZIP Codes are part of our every day language. Most of us know our hometown and a few places we've lived over the years. Some veteran postal employees had a great working knowledge of ZIP codes. But one man has us all beat – he's memorized the entire ZIP Code directory. Lisa Nystuen met up with him in Boulder Colorado.

ZIP Code Man Segment

Reporter Lisa Nystuen: The walking mall here is an eclectic mix of shops, bistros and street performers. There's always something happening. Jugglers, mimes, fire eaters are all part of the free street entertainment here. But one man stands alone in his ability.

ZIP Code Man: Lauren, what ZIP code did you come from? 19130. Lauren came all the way from Philadelphia, PA, and ate at a restaurant near your house called the Striped Bass.

Nystuen: David Rosdeitcher has a unique ability to memorize numbers and has incorporated that skill into an entertaining street show where he shows off his knowledge of the US ZIP Code book.

ZIP Code Man: What ZIP code did you come from originally? 33881. You originally came from a little town called Winter Haven, Florida. It's a little town right off Interstate 4, between Orlando and Tampa.

Nystuen: Why in the world did he choose to memorize a book more than a 1,000 pages thick? Apparently, it was all about survival in the cutthroat world of street entertainment.

ZIP Code Man: I had just another juggling act, so I had to diversify in a way to be competitive with the all the other great acts on the mall. So I was looking for something...different...

Nystuen: Different it is. He mesmerizes crowds with facts about their hometown, along with interesting sites and even well-known eateries. He started memorizing the directory in 1991, and has been perfecting his knowledge.

ZIP Code Man: I started first by memorizing the three digits areas, where the first three numbers give the general area. There are only a thousand of those, which aren't that hard. Then I got the general outline of it, then I got more detailed where I took each three digit area and memorize each individual ZIP code in those areas.

Nystuen: He's impressed with the organization of the directory.

ZIP Code Man: Whoever designed the ZIP directory did a great job it. Because it's beautifully arranged, like a tree. The first number gives a general area then the first three and then more specific. It's a very logical pattern.

Nystuen: So, does he have any tips on remembering where to find lost items?

ZIP Code Man: People ask me, do you ever forget anything? Yeah. I forget where I put my keys. I forget lots of things. I forget everything. I wouldn't be someone to recommend. I remember the things that really matter.

Nystuen: You can find him on Pearl Street, in downtown Boulder Colorado on most summer evenings and during the weekends throughout the rest of the year and don't forget to bring your ZIP code.

ThankThank Notes Segment

Watkins: Cards written by hand -- are they becoming a relic of a bygone era now that nearly everyone has a keyboard in their pocket or purse? Not according to some digital entrepreneurs from Austin, Texas, as Peter Hass explains.

Reporter Peter Hass: Putting pen to paper to jot down a handwritten note is still undoubtedly the best way to express your gratitude to someone for a gift, for their consideration, or for a job well done. But in today's fast-paced, digital world, many people feel they don't have the time for such gestures.

The solution? Well, how about getting someone else to write the Thank You notes on your behalf?

That was the idea Austin, Texas, entrepreneurs Kristen Carney and Anthony Morales came up with when they wanted to send personal Thank You notes to customers of their online company, called Cubit. Realizing that other businesses might find themselves experiencing the same time crunch they had, they started yet another business in October of this year, called "ThankThank Notes." The name, Carney says, comes from the idea that the company can help businesses using the service send out Thank You cards twice as fast.

Kristen Carney: We made a decision that we wanted to have excellent customer service, and as part of that, we were going to send all of our paying customers a handwritten thank you note in the mail. That was going to help us stand out from the other websites and kind of add that personal touch to our customer service.

And so, it worked great when we had just a few customers, but as we started getting more and more paying customers, it was hard to find enough time in the week to sit down and write all these thank you notes. And as co-founders of a small business, we're always putting fires out, so our notes were going out like two or three months later than we wanted them to go out. So we thought, there needs to be a way for businesses like us to send out handwritten thank you notes to their customers.

So we looked online, and we couldn't find a business like this that "got" Web 2.0, right -- that understood the potential of the technology, of how you could take technological

tools and merge that with kind of an army of local staffers and send out thank you notes effectively, business to business.

Hass: At ThankThankNotes.com, customers can choose a template or type in up to 75 words that end up being written by hand in each thank you card. Carney said they've hired five University of Texas students to write the notes and stamp and address the envelopes. Customers pay three dollars per card for the service using a credit card.

Carney: The three dollars was kind of us thinking about, okay, well, if someone else did this service, what would we pay for it? We did do a quick crunch of the numbers -- how much is a stamp, how much is a card, you know, how much are we going to have to pay our students to sit there and write these notes -- and three dollars is what we came up with as what makes sense.

Hass: Customers can choose whether the cards are written by a man or a woman and also ask for the cards to be shipped back in bulk so that a signature can be added or so that the cards are postmarked in their city. For more information or to send a card, visit ThankThank Notes dot com.

News Roundup Segment

Watkins: And now, here's a brief roundup of Postal Service headlines. In a recent article by news agency Reuters, the Postal Service reported a net loss of \$8.5 billion for the most recent fiscal year as mail volume continued to decline, forcing the agency to find ways to overhaul its business.

The Postal Service has been trying to dramatically reform its business practices for years as increasing popularity of e-mail, competition from other delivery services, and the recent economic downturn hurt mail volumes.

This is the fourth straight year the Postal Service has posted net losses despite cost-cutting measures and staff reductions.

The Postal Service also is asking Congress to do away with, or reduce, an annual payment the USPS is required to make to prefund its retiree benefits. That payment hit \$5.5 billion this fiscal year and was a large contributor to the \$8.5 billion loss.

In a recent article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Patrick Donahoe, the Postal Service's deputy postmaster general and chief operating officer, will take over as Postmaster General from the retiring John Potter, who has held the position since 2001 and is stepping down Dec. 3.

Donahoe, a Pittsburgh native, says he is confident the USPS can adapt to changing marketplace conditions.

Quoting Mr. Donahoe, "The Postal Service is still a very viable part of America, from an economic and social standpoint," he said.

Watkins: Thank you for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now we'd like to hear from you. Please send your feedback and story ideas to YourPostalPodcast@usps.com. A

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