



Small Business Q&A

With the Package Coalition

Name: Patti Riordan

Small Business: Smoke Stack Hobby Shop

Location: Lancaster, OH



Tell us about your small business.

We are a [hobby shop](#), locally owned in Lancaster, OH, that carries model trains, remote control cars and planes, plastic model kits and a lot of scratch building supplies. The Smoke Stack Hobby Shop serves a huge portion of southeastern Ohio and into neighboring states due to the lack of brick and mortar hobby shops.

How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact your small business?

Since people were homebound, they looked towards their hobbies -- trains and model kits -- to give them something to do. So, our sales of those items were a lot stronger in the spring and summer months than normal. We had to be creative to reach people, using Facebook and ecommerce.

During the shutdown, our website saved the day. We made the very hard decision to go to free shipping, because at the end of the day, having products sit on our shelves wasn't going to do anybody any good. We made the decision to make payroll, and keep everyone employed by selling on ecommerce. We never cut anybody's hours or paychecks.

How does your business use the U.S. Postal Service?

We use the Postal Service every single day. Our mail carrier comes in every single day to the shop and drops off mail and picks up packages going out to customers. Last year when we offered free shipping, we used primarily USPS to keep our total costs manageable. A lot of our customers are rural customers and because they don't have a hobby shop to go into, we can ship via USPS to someone in Wyoming or someplace remote.

How would you compare the U.S. Postal Service with other delivery options?

I would say an average package price for us with the Postal Service is \$5 dollars or less, but if you go towards some of the other carriers it's up to \$20. People are willing to pay \$5 to get something shipped; there are not as many people wanting to pay \$20.

How would you be impacted if USPS stopped 6-day-per-week delivery?

There's no way we would be able to ship our product other than USPS. So we would just have to wait and see, but I would expect our ecommerce sales would drop, I would anticipate changes to USPS delivery would add delivery time and probably cause people to be unhappy with what they would perceive to be our service.

How would you be impacted if USPS package prices were raised significantly?

That would be painful. I mean we definitely couldn't absorb it, so we would have to increase the price of shipping and again consumers may accept a \$5 shipping charge but once you start pushing too high above that, they are just not going to do it unless it's something they have to have. Prices are so well known across the internet that increasing prices to cover up some of the shipping cost doesn't work either.

What's the most important thing you want a Member of Congress to know about USPS and your business?

Anything that really reduces the ability of the postal service to deliver daily, 6 days a week, packages at a reasonable price for the average small business is just a step in the wrong direction if we want small businesses to thrive.