BEFORE THE
POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20268–0001

ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REVIEW, 2019

Docket No. ACR2019

RESPONSES OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE TO
QUESTIONS 1-4 OF CHAIRMAN'S INFORMATION REQUEST NO. 22

The United States Postal Service hereby provides its responses to the above-

listed questions of Chairman's Information Request No. 22, issued on March 19, 2020.

Each question is stated verbatim and followed by the response.

Respectfully submitted,

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

By its attorney:

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RESPONSES OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
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1.   In response to a Chairman's Information Request (CHIR), the Postal Service states that it "continually monitors its social media platforms to identify customer pinch points and triage those situations for remediation."[1]   Please provide examples of how the Postal Service identifies customer pinch points and triages those pinch points for remediation using social media platforms. In the response, please list the social media platforms the Postal Service monitors and describe the methods used to evaluate customer experience through these platforms.

RESPONSE:

The Postal Service identifies customer pinch points using two teams: Social Business Intelligence (SBI) and Social Customer Response (SCR). The SBI team uses social listening software to review Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, news, web, forums, blogs, radio, TV, Reddit, and reviews.

The SBI team uses social listening to obtain an idea of the overall conversation about the Postal Service on traditional and social media. This is used to gain insights into the Postal Service's products and services, as well as for situational assessment (such as natural disaster). Because the SBI team is based in the Postal Service's Communications department, it is able to interface with other appropriate departments (e.g. Social Customer Response, Marketing, Operations, United States Postal Inspection Service, Human Resources, regional, or Government Relations) more nimbly.

The SCR team reviews and responds to customer concerns on the Postal Service's corporate Twitter and Facebook accounts six days per week. The SCR team monitors and evaluates customer experience using three methods:

1. Individual audits by the supervisor: the supervisor regularly reviews the interactions of SCR associates.

2. Customer Satisfaction Survey: this survey is sent to every customer who communicates via twitter after their situation has been addressed. The

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[1] Responses of the United States Postal Service to Questions 1-11 of Chairman's Information Request No. 7, February 3, 2020, question 4.a.

participation rate is 40-55 percent, much higher than the typical Point-of-Sales survey of 0-3 percent.

3. Sentiment Conversion Rate: the software assigns sentiment at the beginning and end of completed conversations.

The results from the latter two methods are reported to senior staff on a weekly basis.

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2.   In a recent report, the Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) stated that it conducted a customer sentiment analysis using text-mining software on verbatim responses related to Certified Mail from the Point of Sale and Delivery surveys.[2]

  a.   Please explain whether the Postal Service conducts customer sentiment analyses on responses from its customer surveys, social media platforms, or both. In the response, please explain the process for conducting customer sentiment analyses and describe how the results of these analyses are used to improve customer experience.

  b.   If the Postal Service does not conduct customer sentiment analyses, please explain whether the Postal Service has considered doing so and the reasons for not conducting customer sentiment analyses.

RESPONSE:

a.

The Postal Service conducts customer sentiment analysis on responses from its customer surveys using a variety of methods. Specifically, all customer surveys fielded by the Postal Service include at least one verbatim response question, which gives respondents an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. Responses to these questions are analyzed using natural language processing algorithms. These algorithms can identify themes and topics that each respondent mentions in their verbatim responses. Additionally, each response is also analyzed for positive, negative or neutral sentiment. The Postal Service is then able to use these data to identify sentiment and themes across different segments of customers and touchpoints, recognize trending issues, diagnose the most common pain points, and calculate the impact of these pain points on customer satisfaction. This information is frequently shared with stakeholders across the organization, who are looking to identify common

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[2] United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *Delivering Peace of Mind: Certified Mail and the U.S. Postal Service,* Report No. RARC-WP18-002, November 27, 2017, Appendix C:

pain points and issues across different touchpoints. In turn, this helps the Postal Service prioritize the most important pain points, and design effective solutions. The Postal Service also uses these data to share the "voice of the customer" within the organization in the form of powerful verbatim responses that reflect the biggest pain points.

Social Media Platforms:

The Postal Service's Social Media platform does not factor in Certified Mail from the Point of Sale Delivery Surveys in overall sentiment analysis reporting. However, the Postal Service does conduct high-level customer sentiment analysis on its social platforms using a variety of methods. Specifically, all customer surveys fielded by the Postal Service Twitter include at least one verbatim response question, which gives respondents an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. Responses to these questions are analyzed using natural language processing algorithms. These algorithms can identify themes and topics that each respondent mentions in their verbatim. Additionally, each response is also analyzed for positive, negative or neutral sentiment. The Postal Service is then able to use these data to identify sentiment and themes across different segments of customers and touchpoints, recognize trending issues, diagnose the most common pain points, and calculate the impact of these pain points on customer satisfaction.

Examples of how analysis is used to improve customer service include the following:

- After reviewing the nature of customer concerns following natural disasters, SBI noticed a consistent pattern of concerns: if services would cease, employee safety, when services would resume, and how to request hold mail or change of

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Customer Sentiment Analysis, at 22, available at: *https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/document-library-files/2017/RARC-WP-18-002.pdf*.

address. In response, these concerns were later anticipated by preemptively posting content on the Postal Service's corporate social media accounts.

- SCR noticed that 12-15 percent of incoming posts related to International mail. In response, a video explaining international mail services was created and a pinned post was created for the USPSHelp twitter account. This led to a reduction of incoming conversations related to international mail. Currently, only 3-6 percent of incoming conversations involve international mail.

- Hurricane Maria provides additional examples for SBI. It was noted that some customers were unsure if their particular Local Post Office (LPO) was open given the information on the webpage. Postal Service staff contacted the LPO, informed the customer directly, and then provided a real-time update on the status of that location for the website. Additionally, when customers expressed concerns about package theft, USPIS was asked to investigate. The USPIS found that the cause was items opening in-transit. In response, Communications changed its messaging (if it fits it ships, but don't overstuff) and developed educational materials in Spanish.

- When the John Lennon stamp was released, SBI noted that international customers were frustrated they could not purchase the stamp. International customers cannot make purchases on the Postal Service's website, but this option was available on an internet auction site which did not yet offer these stamps. This was rectified by contacting the Postal Service's stamps team which runs the Postal Service's internet auction site and making that stamp available. When the Marvin Gaye stamp was released, it was immediately made available on the Postal Service's internet auction site to accommodate international buyers.

b.

N/A

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3.   During the 2017 holiday season, the Postal Service deployed a chatbot on its website to help customers track packages and provide them options for the next steps once a package's location was determined.[3]

a.   Please describe the results of deploying a chatbot on the Postal Service website during the 2017 holiday season. In the response, please discuss lessons learned and whether the Postal Service deployed a chatbot during the 2018 and 2019 holiday seasons.

b.   Please describe other ways the Postal Service uses chatbots or other artificial intelligence to evaluate and improve customer experience. In the response, please explain the methods used to evaluate and improve customer experience using chatbots or other artificial intelligence.

c.   If the Postal Service has not used chatbots or other artificial intelligence in other instances to evaluate and improve customer experience, please explain whether the Postal Service has considered doing so and the reasons for not using chatbots or other artificial intelligence.

d.   Please describe the Postal Service's plans for leveraging artificial intelligence to evaluate and improve customer experience.

RESPONSE:

a.

A chatbot pilot was launched during the 2017 holiday season on the Postal Service's tracking page and was intended to deflect calls from the Customer Care Center. When a customer entered their tracking number on USPS.com, the chatbot launched automatically with a customized greeting based on the current package status to help the customer self-service. However, as a result of on-time delivery, not all customers required the chatbot when tracking their package. Therefore, the pilot was revised so that customers had to click on an icon on the tracking page to launch the

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[3] United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, "Getting Real with Artificial Intelligence," January 29, 2018, available at: *https://www.uspsoig.gov/blog/getting-real-artificial-intelligence*.

chatbot. This change was incorporated to better target customers who actually needed help, rather than all customers.

The results of the chatbot pilot revealed that the chatbot was successful at deflecting calls from the Customer Care Center. However, the pilot had an unexpected high impact on the Postal Service's network traffic during the 2017 holiday season and impacted other mission-critical functionalities of USPS.com. As a result of the stress on the network during the 2017 holiday season, the chatbot pilot ended and was not deployed in the 2018 or 2019 holiday season.

b.

Using lessons learned from the chatbot pilot, the Postal Service launched the Virtual Agent pilot in FY 2019 in an attempt to deflect calls from the Customer Care Center. Once customers call the Customer Care Center, they use the existing Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, which only defines the call type and offers some menu selection self-service options. In an attempt to increase self-service functionality on certain call types, the Postal Service is piloting a Virtual Agent functionality that utilizes natural language processing. This is anticipated to better serve customers and ultimately reduce the number of calls received by a live agent.

c.

N/A

d.

Currently, the Virtual Agent pilot assists with scheduling/modifying/cancelling passport appointments, which is a functionality not available in the IVR. In addition, the Virtual Agent is able to address passport inquiries while providing automated responses for

frequently asked passport questions. Ultimately, the Virtual Agent pilot is expected to improve the customer experience by offering self-service options without requiring customers to hold in the queue for a live agent. These customer experience improvements will also improve the average speed to answer and handle time, and reduce call abandonment.

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4. Recent Office of Management and Budget guidance on improving customer experience suggests that agencies measure customer confidence or trust.[4] For example, a confidence or trust question may ask whether an interaction increased a customer's confidence in a program or service. *Id.*

    a.   Please explain whether the Postal Service measures customer confidence or trust using its customer surveys or other methods for evaluating customer experience. In the response, please identify the confidence or trust question(s) on the applicable survey(s) or describe the methods for evaluating customer confidence or trust.

    b.   If the Postal Service does not measure customer confidence or trust, please explain whether the Postal Service has considered doing so and the reasons for not measuring customer confidence or trust.

RESPONSE:

a.

The Postal Service does not currently measure customer confidence or trust using its customer surveys or other methods for evaluating customer experience.

b.

The Postal Service is not pursuing measurement of customer confidence or trust. It is industry best practice to measure customer satisfaction.

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[4] Office of Management and Budget, Circular No. A-11 Preparation, Submission, and Execution of the Budget (December 2019), § 280.7, available at: *https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/a11.pdf.*