



Helpful, not harmful communications

By John A. Gentle, DLP

CONSIDER THIS POST-HOLIDAY SCENARIO: You go to return something you received for Christmas, and when you finally get to the front of the exchange line after waiting 20 minutes, a smirking face behind the counter condescendingly tells you that “all you needed to do is pick out the right size and exchange it at the regular checkout counter.”

How were you supposed to know that, and why did it take so long to get that information? For those of us who occasionally volunteer to stand in line, two- or three-minute waits are certainly tolerable—although a simple sign would have gotten us out of the store a lot faster.

If you value your time and productivity, and you want your business partners’ employees to be able to communicate effectively without being frustrated by your employees and your communications systems, then it falls to you to ensure that every logistics organization inside your company works passionately and intelligently toward that end.

For example, here’s a common yet critical communication choke point that merits your attention: Warehouse personnel and management are flat wrong when they say that it’s not their job to keep carriers and drivers moving; to stay informed about appointments, loading, and unloading delays; or getting their paperwork signed in a timely manner. In fact, it’s just the opposite.

These warehouse teams need to ensure that carriers have easy access to your messaging systems that provide directions; safe driving rules inside your complex; proper check-in procedures; as well as counting and load-securement information.

My experience is that ware handlers—I used to be one—are very impatient people. They consistently and rightly remind us that they have important things to accomplish during their shift, and they don’t need

interruptions or any delays. When we installed an automated WMS, any delay over three seconds was met with complaints, and delays of a minute resulted in operators trying, sometimes successfully, to ignore the system and put the product in bays that they thought were reasonable.

Imagine how you would feel if warehouse personnel consistently and intentionally ignored you, seemingly taking pleasure in making you wait until they’re good and ready? Why would you want to do business with these companies?

Likewise, your company’s dispatch team needs to be well staffed and well educated to ensure that superior communications are in place that can facilitate extraordinary events like system failures, surge, vacations, illnesses, reconsignments, returns, and detention. Progressive companies have websites that allow carriers to

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Now more than ever it’s critical that your logistics organizations provide highly visible, self-help information systems and act in an empathetic and helpful manner to assist drivers, dispatchers, and other carrier administrative teams in the execution of their business on your behalf.

Your teams first needs to answer the phone and then use phrases like “How can I help you” rather than “I’m busy what do you want?” If you hate long lines coupled with impersonal and unhelpful staff, then you know what poor service looks like. My question to you is: Have you really tested to see if your staff treats your carriers any better? □

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