24/7 POST – QUALITY AROUND THE CLOCK

By implementing new ideas and introducing innovative services, Austrian Post always offers its customers the highest quality everywhere and at any time. The customers have expressed their appreciation with steadily improving levels of satisfaction.

“W e focus on our customers” is one of the guiding principles of Austrian Post. In fact, the leading postal and logistics services provider in the country is continually working on developing new products and services corresponding to current customer requirements. In recent years customer needs have massively changed. More freedom, flexibility and autonomy are just a few of the most outspoken demands of our day and age, and thus also the wish of Austrian Post’s customers. For example, people are no longer limited to fixed business hours when buying clothing, electronics and other products. Online shopping platforms enable virtual window shopping, even in the
If the customer has not already prepared and printed at home the stamps required for parcels, he can also do it by going to the franking machines located in the self-service zones. When it comes to parcels, the customer no longer has to be concerned with the weight. Simply enter the longest and shortest side of the mail item, and the device will automatically determine the correct price for shipping. You can pay the postage either with your cash or credit card.

The packed and sufficiently franked parcel is simply deposited in the drop-off box and sent in this manner. This is done simply, without having to wait at the counter and independent of opening hours. The customer receives a printed confirmation of mailing and can check where his parcel is at any time thanks to the online “track & trace” service offered by Austrian Post.

middle of the night. So why not quickly (and in an uncomplicated manner) pick up parcels on the way home after spending an enjoyable evening with friends? Austrian Post makes it possible. The catchword: self-service!

What may sound like wishful thinking for some people has already proven its suitability in practice. Some 260 self-service zones at Austrian Post branch offices are equipped with packing stations, franking machines and drop-off boxes in order to allow customers to post their mail items at any time, day or night. 111 of these self-service zones also include modern pick-up stations, turning the “24/7” receiving of mail items into an everyday reality for them. Another 15 pick-up stations are available to customers at OMV petrol stations or outside of the branch network. The network of nationwide self-service zones will even expand to 300 by the end of 2015, putting 200 pick-up stations at the disposal of customers.

Austrian Post even went a step farther, opening up the first completely self-service branch office in 2014, located in the municipal offices of Leutasch in Tyrol. This interesting pilot project is the logical further development of Austrian

“Self-service zones reflect the spirit of the times.”
MARKUS WIMMER, SELF-SERVICE SOLUTIONS, BRANCH NETWORK
If the recipient of a large-sized or registered mail item is not at home at the time of delivery, a notification slip i.e. the famous “yellow slip” is deposited in his letterbox as usual. The customer takes this slip to the pick-up station in the branch office, holds the barcode printed on the slip over the barcode scanner, signs his name on the display, and the corresponding compartment with the mail item is opened automatically.

By the way: mail items can also be picked up with the new e-notification. Simply have the barcode on the mobile phone scanned by the pick-up station!

In 2014, more than 350,000 mail items were picked up from the pick-up stations, which feature at least 17 and a maximum of 290 compartments. And the use and popularity of these pick-up stations are increasing.

If the mail carrier sees that the recipient of a large-sized or registered mail item is not at home, he puts the mail item in the pick-up box, usually installed next to the letterboxes in larger residential complexes, and a notification slip in the letterbox. The slip contains a chip allowing only the customer to open up the pick-up box and take out the parcel. By the end of 2014 more than half a million mail items were deposited in the pick-up boxes. Austrian Post hopes to raise this figure to one million by the end of 2015.

Post’s popular self-service offering and gives a vision of how postal services might be used in the future.

Strategy for “the customer as king” Close to half of the Austrian population is already aware of the availability of the comfortable self-service zones. In Vienna the figure is even higher, at more than 60%. “The expansion of the 24/7 offering definitely reflects the spirit of the times, and is gladly accepted by customers”, says Markus Wimmer, who is responsible for the self-service solutions in the branch network, getting to the crux of the matter. This is clearly shown by the use of the self-service zones. In 2014, more than one million transactions were carried out using the self-service zones of Austrian Post. Although self-service zones tend to be more frequently used in larger metropolitan areas with a population of at least 50,000, the inhabitants of Liezen in Styria have proven to be the most eager users. 90% of all return shipments to mail order houses are deposited in the drop-off box. The private customers do not have to pay for the postage costs. The related return
label has either been sent with the parcel or can be conveniently downloaded online. In developing all the various features of the self-service zones, considerable importance was attached to ensuring simple and intuitive handling. Regular customer satisfaction surveys confirm that Austrian Post’s efforts have met with success. 44% of all the people interviewed say that the drop-off boxes in the branch offices are “very easy to use”, and close to half claim that they are “very easy to understand without previous knowledge”. The drop-off boxes comprise the most well-known and frequently used of the diverse service options integrated into the self-service zones.

Self-service: child’s play
Arian, close to two and a half years old, is one of the youngest fans of Austrian Post and its services. Together with his mother, Arian regularly uses the self-service zone located in “his” branch office in Graz 8016. “Arian is particularly fascinated with the parcels disappearing behind the shutters”, says Florentine, explaining the enthusiasm of her offspring for depositing the parcel in the drop-off box. Similarly, picking up parcels is also a delightful treat for the little guy. Growing up to become a “digital native”, Arian already loves interacting with computers at such a very young age. Arian cheers with joy and loudly cries “hocus-pocus” when the time comes for the doors in the wall to open up as if by magic.

In contrast, his mother especially values the fact that by going to the pick-up station she no longer has to queue up on line. “Moreover, in my job as a hospital physician, my working hours frequently collide with the business hours of the branch office. Thanks to the pick-up station, I can also receive my parcels in the morning or in the evening as well.”

Of the 126 pick-up stations, twelve have been installed at OMV petrol stations in the country, with 40 additional petrol stations scheduled to complement this network over the next two years. Since 2007, customers have also been able to post their parcels at many OMV petrol stations which have a VIVA shop.

Parcels now put into “letterboxes”
A special type of pick-up station – the pick-up box – represents yet another practical innovation developed by Austrian Post. More than 8,400 of these yellow, white and anthracite-grey steel boxes have already been installed in larger housing complexes, 80% of them in Vienna. By the end of 2015 more than 11,000 should exist throughout the country. Up to 95% of all mail items fit inside depending on the size of the box. “In this way registered letters and parcels end up precisely where they belong, namely in the...
recipient’s house”, says Jörg Pribil, Head of End Customer Initiatives & Service, in praise of the innovative delivery option. “In this way the customer avoids having to go down to the branch office or postal partner. This service is very positively perceived in light of the omnipresent feeling people constantly have these days of being pressed for time. The pick-up box perfectly fits in our strategy of steadily increasing customer convenience and enabling customers to more easily take advantage of postal services.” Apart from the time factor, it is the comfort and benefits involved which form the underlying factor for the top levels of acceptance of the pick-up boxes, according to the opinion research institute IFES. Although older and less mobile people benefit the most from the close proximity of the pick-up boxes, the most positive feedback (“very interesting indeed”) comes from younger citizens in large urban areas, where people increasingly and deliberately tend to get around without cars.

“The Post App is here”
Another option enabling customers to receive their parcels almost anywhere is made possible by the Post App, which has been available in all established app stores at no charge since June 2014. “In this way the customer can not only track and trace his mail items, but also redirect them”, states Johann Haselberger, Product Management, Parcel Logistics Austria, raving about the new service. “More specifically, this means that the recipient can provide Austrian Post with another delivery address before the first delivery attempt is made, e.g. a branch office near his address or place of work, a designated mail pick-up station, a neighbor or even a suitable location at home, e.g. the garage.”

“The nation-wide branch network of Austrian Post is being continuously modernised and given a more attractive design.

“With the Post App the customer can not only track and trace his mail items but also redirect them.”
JOHANN HASELBERGER, PRODUCT MANAGEMENT, PARCEL LOGISTICS AUSTRIA

AUSTRIAN POST ANNUAL REPORT 2014 41
Universally omnipresent
The self-service offering of Austrian Post represents a timely and up-to-date enhancement of the company’s service portfolio in order to make the lives of customers as comfortable and convenient as possible. The customer can freely choose when and in which form he wants to take advantage of Austrian Post services depending on his personal preferences and individual requirements. “Above all, elderly people sometimes have to overcome inner inhibitions about using modern devices. For this reason they may prefer personal contact with employees at the counter”, explains Josef Pürstl, Deputy Branch Management of the branch office in Schladming, postal code 8970.

For this purpose, the Austrian Post customer still continues to have a nationwide network of postal service points at his disposal. Austrian Post is always close by in Austria. With its 1,826 postal service points, the company operates a nationwide, closely-knit network of outlets, far higher than the legally stipulated minimum for universal service providers. In addition to 520 company-operated branch offices, a total of 1,306 postal partners, e. g. food stores, tobacconists, petrol stations and municipal offices, ensure meaningful synergies and spare customers needless waiting and distances to cover (not to mention the higher customer frequency and increased revenue for the postal partners). The youngest customers have already noticed the advantages of this concept. “Austrian Post is everywhere”, says Arian with a large grin on his face. “And one can go there at any time”, the two and a half year old boy concludes, coming close to precisely summarizing the customer strategy of Austrian Post.

The Austrian Post delivery staff is also literally everywhere. They visit every household and company every day. For many people, this face-to-face encounter with “their” mail carrier is a gratifying experience they would not want to miss. This is reflected in surveys in which the mail and parcel carriers are regularly giving top marks. In particular, people who are older or living alone appreciate the opportunity to exchange a few words with someone. In turn, younger customers such as Arian enjoy personally receiving a letter or parcel.

Shopping without boundaries
The bottom line is that all the new, innovative services supplied by Austrian Post can only lead to success if the parcel ends up in Austria. The seemingly limitless (and borderless) online business does in fact have limits when the mail order houses refuse to ship their products to Austria. Arian’s mother can tell you a thing or two about this. “I like to buy products for children. However, I was often annoyed at the fact that the retailers would not ship the desired goods to Austria.” Thanks to “buybuy”, Florentine can now say goodbye to this nuisance once and for all. The newly-launched e-commerce service of Austrian Post offers its customers the opportunity to purchase items from more than 350,000 online shops in the USA and Great Britain (for more details, refer to “The Online World of Austrian Post” starting on page 54).

Advice and assistance
Against the backdrop of the huge offering of products and services offered by Austrian Post, customers still have questions in their minds. In order to quickly, comprehensively and competently respond to these inquiries, Austrian Post operates its own customer service centers at four locations in Vienna, Graz, Klagenfurt and Linz. There a total of about 120 employees with the requisite know-how and usually longstanding experience in the branch network have some 900,000 customer contacts each year. They are not only responsible for handling customer requests on the service hotline for private and business customers, but also deal with written inquiries and complaints sent by e-mail, a specially designed contact form or via Facebook. Since 2014 the focus has also been on social media. Great emphasis is placed on answering written questions on the same day. How well these efforts are perceived by customers is confirmed by the monthly customer satisfaction measurements compiled by the Linz-based institute “Market”. People who are in contact with Austrian Post’s customer service are continually asked about their level of satisfaction. Questions focus on general satisfaction as well as specific details such as satisfaction with the way customers are greeted, how Post employees introduce themselves, along with the way customers are greeted, how Post employees introduce themselves, along with competence and ability to solve problems. Customer satisfaction with the way telephone inquiries are handled rose by 4.9% from 2013 to 2014, and by 6.3% with respect to written inquiries. On average, the people interviewed are satisfied with Austrian Post’s customer service. This survey also confirms that Austrian Post is on the right track in its efforts to consistently and successfully apply the measures described above and focus on steadily enhancing the benefits and comfort for customers. In this way, it will sustainably safeguard its position as the leading company in the Austrian postal and logistics sector.
What about sending a love letter as an attachment to an e-mail? You can’t be serious! Although we may in fact be in the digital age, there is information which should be only written on paper and put in a closed envelope for the recipient – and only for this individual. It does not matter whether the contents are private or of a professional nature. There are good reasons why sensitive bank data is also not sent over the Internet. Or rather, one should say: one should not send it over the Internet.

“In the digital age, the conscientious handling of personal data is more important than ever. Data can so easily end up in the wrong hands, as numerous surveillance and espionage affairs and hacker attacks have demonstrated. The question is not only who I give my data to, but above all, which data I should send”, says Thomas Strohmaier, Data Protection Officer at Austrian Post. “In this regard, the electronic bugging scandal by the NSA had at least one positive effect. Today nobody can say anymore that he did not know how vulnerable e-mails, messenger services and social media actually are.” If your mail item is really important, be sure to use the services provided by Austrian Post. “You can certainly rely on the tried and tested Austrian principle of postal secrecy and the confidentiality of letters.” Whoever wants to know more can satisfy his or her curiosity and take a look at the Website www.schreib-weise.at (available in German only), where Austrian Post not only provides an overview of data protection and security in the digital media, but also reveals useful facts about legal regulations on correspondence (without getting too legalese) and deals in a variety of ways with the general issue of writing.