



Small Business Q&A

With the Package Coalition

Name: Sara Mader

Small Business: Palouse Brand

Location: Palouse, WA

Tell us about your small business.

13 years ago when my family started [Palouse Brand](#), the goal was to connect customers directly with the farmers who grow their food. Palouse provides affordable products that people feel good about eating and comes right to their doorstep. Our products tell customers what day the seeds were planted, who the combine driver was and all kinds of other details. Palouse's customers live all over the country, and because of flat rates at the U.S. Postal Service, we can even ship as far as Guam and Hawaii. The business supports dozens of local families in rural Washington, from farmers and truckers to cleaners and packagers.



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

About 10% of our business was through the U.S. Postal Service pre-COVID. Our sales were starting to change as early as February 2020 when we started doing numbers we have never seen in our lives. At one point I had 6 people fulltime, and their only job was to buy shipping for the massive volume of orders that were coming in, working around the clock. Then when things started to shut down in March, we partnered with our rural post office because we'd exhausted all of our regional packaging resources -- USPS would ship us these flat rate envelopes that somebody had found under a stack of something. Several days straight we sold amounts in 24 hours that we normally do in one month.

The U.S. Postal Service worked super close with us to try and keep up with our volumes. They brought teams into the facility to see how we were packaging, to teach us how to package the boxes stronger, to tape better. They evaluated our fulfillment processes internally, and they supported us to no end to push all of this volume. I know in a couple of months we did over a million dollars with the Postal Service.

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

I haven't raised the prices on my best selling product since the day it launched 13 years ago, and the only reason I can do that is because of the Postal Service. The post office has been reliable in a way that other carriers just can't support the supply we have going out. The key to keeping our food prices low is our partnership with the Postal Service. It's also really important to know that the Postal Service supports our rural employees. It's putting jobs in our rural communities. People are better; they have healthcare now, they have dental now. Truthfully I don't think I could do the volume I do if I had to raise my prices.

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

Customers want 2-day shipping. They want the ability to receive their products any time they can. It's not just Amazon, it's all ecommerce because we see the same things happening when we sell on the Walmart platform. I have to compete against the grocery superstore down the street, so if my customers cannot get my product for 5 days, they won't buy from me. The Postal Service is supporting these rural communities and other small business owners like me because that's the only way we can compete, straight to customers.

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

I would see my sales go way down.

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

I want Congress to understand the detriment that it's going to cause people locally and nationally in increased food prices, in loss of jobs if postal package prices were raised significantly. It is absolutely the wrong timing to do this with the supply chain shortages that are already happening. I mean look at the grocery stores. This is the wrong time for people to take food away from other homes, and that's what they would be doing.