

No More Snail Mail?

Wary of braving the elements to retrieve letters (do people still write those?) and other documents from your mailbox? Switzerland's national mail carrier eliminates the hassle for many of its customers by providing electronic delivery options.

Swiss Post, which operates in 16 countries worldwide, introduced a password-protected electronic mailbox in June called the Swiss Post Box. Here's how it works: upon approval, correspondence is opened, scanned, converted to a PDF file and sent to recipients via the Internet. Items can be forwarded or archived like conventional e-mail messages.

Currently, the service is available in Switzerland and

Germany. Expansion to Austria, France, Italy and Liechtenstein was slated to begin earlier this year. Monthly subscription fees start at Euro 14 (approximately \$21.00).

People who prefer traditional delivery can continue to receive their mail the old-fashioned way.

Domestically, some experts suggest digitizing mail as part of a solution to the U.S. Postal Service's money woes (it was nearly \$7 billion in the red during the 2009 fiscal year). They cite convenience (easy access from any location) and cost savings among benefits.

Resource: Swiss Post Box at www.swisspostbox.com

National Aviation Contest Preparing for Liftoff in Terre Haute

Excitement is in the air at Indiana State University (ISU), where planning is underway for the 2010 National Intercollegiate Flying Association (NIFA) competition in May.

Held annually, the student-run contest consists of two event categories: ground (including computer accuracy, aircraft pre-flight inspection and simulated comprehensive aircraft navigation) and flight (such as short field landings and message drop). Student teams representing approximately 30 schools from across the United States will participate. More than 100 aircraft will be utilized, with the weeklong event attracting an estimated 600 to 800 people to Terre Haute.

Vern Bothwell, an aviation department instructor and faculty advisor at ISU for the competition, notes that while it's difficult to predict exactly how much money the event will generate for the community, there are several significant advantages.

"It's a boon economically," he emphasizes, citing business opportunities for local hotels, restaurants and gas stations, "but it's also an image enhancement for the community. This is a major thing in the collegiate aviation world, and this is a first (ISU's role as host)."

Praising the aspiring aviators organizing the event, Bothwell asserts, "The students are making it happen."

Another exciting development: ISU will host the 2011 University Aviation Association fall conference in Indianapolis.

Resource: Vern Bothwell, Indiana State University, at (812) 237-2641 or www.indstate.edu



A 'Business' League of Their Own

Daniel W. DeHayes sought to fill a void when he co-founded the Alliance in 1990. Nearly two decades later, the consortium he helped create to foster networking among business leaders still provides a platform for professional development and camaraderie.

The Alliance is comprised of 46 top decision-makers at privately held Hoosier companies (with at least \$5 million in annual revenue). Industries range from manufacturing to retail and span the state. Membership is limited to one company per industry segment.

"The companies are all non-competing firms, so they can talk about their business with the assumption of confidentiality."

— Daniel W. DeHayes

Quarterly meetings feature presentations by experts and university faculty (local and national), breakout sessions and a reception. Discussion topics have included sustainability, health care insurance and leadership.

"We encourage them to use each other as sounding boards," remarks DeHayes, who serves as the group's facilitator and is professor emeritus of business administration at the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University-Bloomington, where the Alliance was formed. "The companies are all non-competing firms, so they can talk about their business with the assumption of confidentiality."

DeHayes says the Alliance's partnerships with universities help set it apart from similar groups.

"As far as I know, none of the other organizations have faculty coming in on a regular basis," he contends. "We had a faculty member from Butler (at a recent meeting) talk about how to get more revenue from your existing clients."

In addition, undergraduate and graduate students from IU and Butler often are invited to observe meeting sessions.

Resource: The Alliance at www.theallianceforum.org

Entrepreneurship Majors Working Up a ‘Sweat’

Your heart is pounding as you pitch a business idea to a panel of entrepreneurs, angel investors and venture capitalists. What you stand to gain: start-up capital. At risk: your ability to graduate from college.

A new course offered at Indiana University-Bloomington places select entrepreneurship majors in the above scenario. An emphasis on risk vs. reward and realistic curriculum earned the class a telling moniker: the “Spine Sweat Experience.”

Students develop a business plan that they ultimately present to a panel of evaluators. Individuals who earn an “A” are awarded a stipend to help launch the business or apply toward tuition. Those assigned a “C” pass the course, but receive no funding. Anything lower than a “C” is a failing grade.

Fifteen students participated when Spine Sweat was introduced last spring. Ninety percent passed; 25% garnered an “A.”

Dr. Donald F. Kuratko designed the course at Ball State University and revamped it when he came to IU. He is the Kelley School of Business’ Jack M. Gill Chair of Entrepreneurship and executive director of the Johnson Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation.

“Students felt that in their academic career, they had never



IU students make their high-stakes case for their business plan.

been challenged to that extreme level and that they had pushed themselves beyond their limits,” he declares. “I think because of that, in their life’s ambitions they’ll do greater things.

“Evaluators felt it was the most realistic class they had ever seen ... and that we were giving students a true entrepreneur experience they would never get in another classroom.”

Resource: Dr. Donald F. Kuratko, Indiana University-Bloomington, at (812) 855-4248 or www.kelley.indiana.edu/jcei

Education Driving County’s Entrepreneurial Efforts

A new non-profit in Hamilton County will act as a conduit for entrepreneurial activity.

Located in Carmel, the Entrepreneurship Advancement Center (EAC) will assist entrepreneurs by holding educational events, promoting networking and mentoring opportunities, and connecting entrepreneurs with a variety of resources.

“One of the major goals of the EAC is to provide a place to help people who are interested in starting a business – and those who are already in business – move to the next level,” explains executive director Cathy Langlois.

Introducing high school students to entrepreneurship careers is another focus.

The EAC began as an initiative of the Hamilton County Alliance (the area’s economic development organization) in response to a 2004 study revealing the need for enhanced coordination of local efforts. It became a separate entity this summer.

Existing partnerships (which facilitated guest speaker presentations, business plan competitions and more) with secondary schools will continue.

“We’re excited about the opportunities we’ve seen so far and really looking forward to moving the Center to a new level,” Langlois emphasizes. “We’d like to create a good model (for high schools) that could be used by other districts throughout the state and a model for how to more effectively work with entrepreneurial businesses in your community.”

Resource: Cathy Langlois, Entrepreneurship Advancement Center, at www.hcalliance.com or (317) 573-4950

Shorts written by Symone C. Skrzycki

Producing a New Type of Business Card

The business card is getting a makeover.

Many professionals are turning to indie publishing (that’s designing and producing your own book – with assistance) to establish credibility and promote their businesses. This is spawning a new chapter in networking: utilizing the “book as a business card.”

“What we’re finding is that more and more people are using a book to differentiate themselves in the business place as well as to give themselves credibility that oftentimes only a book can do,” shares Keith Ogorek, vice president of marketing for indie book publishing leader Author Solutions.

Headquartered in Bloomington, the global company has operations in Indianapolis, the United Kingdom and the Philippines. For roughly \$1,000, authors can submit a manuscript and receive a custom-designed book cover and interior. Listings are posted on Amazon.com.

“We can get a book to market in a matter of 45 days,” Ogorek notes. “Traditional publishers can take 12 to 14 months. It’s a pretty amazing opportunity.”

He stresses that books serve as a powerful marketing tool and make a greater impression than traditional business cards.

“Let’s say I’m a journalist and can interview two people with equal experience,” Ogorek proposes. “One has a book and one doesn’t. In my mind, if I don’t know either of the people, the person who wrote the book has more credibility and some perceived expertise.”

Resource: Keith Ogorek, Author Solutions, at (888) 519-5121 or www.authorsolutions.com