

Concerns About AWPS 'Goulash'



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Across the Postal Service, a wave of concern has started because the Automated Workforce Projection System (AWPS) is now being implemented in all parts of the country—concern because of the impact it can have on your office if you are not fully aware of what drives the numbers and what you can do to help yourself. Hours are being cut, complement requests rejected, and the impact this will have is an unknown. Goulash, as we so fondly remember, seemed to come from what was left over in the kitchen, but mom could always take those ingredients, give it a personal touch, a local flare and we loved it. Could you imagine goulash from a can? The same can be said for AWPS.

AWPS has been around for a very long time. It is a canned product, but you do have some control of its ingredients. It is a **model** whose purpose is to assist with complement management. It is used as a base in the Western Area programs SOV, (Small Office Variance) and CSV (Customer Service Variance). Although never intended as a budgeting tool, it is now just that in many areas. What started as a tool to use as a *guide* for complement and earned hours has become the hammer to micromanage. This brings us to another problem; each Area is using a different version of the system and, in some cases, Districts change it some more which makes it almost impossible for us to help other Postmasters verify its accuracy. There is little flexibility in the model and we are told it is generous. I will be the first to tell you that if our mail comes in on time, the volume matches projected workload,

all key employees show up and do their jobs efficiently, telephone calls come in and take only the number of minutes they budget us for them (three minutes per thousand deliveries), no unusual customer requests, no glitches in closing out finance and the dispatch leaves on time, the model works. If all of our offices were an assembly line and we could require our clerks to work to a standard and had total control of the environment, this model could be great.

Ok, now that I have vented and it is out of my system, let's talk about how we can make the best of this ... because it is not going away. First, you should

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know that the LEAGUE is working very hard to standardize parts of this process while keeping flexibility for the unique circumstances of each post office. We realize that some kind of model is going to be used to staff and budget our offices in the future. Many Districts are already seeing their FY/08 budget allocated off some version of AWPS. What we all want is something that is fair to all and will allow us to do the job we were hired to do. What we want to do is be a part of developing one model that is workable, has some flexibility, addresses the local unique circumstances and we are working hard to achieve just this. This program is going to have a direct impact on your Pay

For Performance (PFP), so it is critical that we all are given the same opportunity for success.

Some of you are seeing a version of this program for the first time while others have been using it for years. Western Area, and then the Pacific Area, have been using it for a complement tool for a long time. Districts within the Western Area have taken it a step further and used the same earned hour system to allocate budget. Is it a good thing to use it for allocating budget? One thing I can tell you is that at least we all know exactly how the budget was allocated and everyone within that District was treated the same. This is the up-side of having one system, one program tailored to your District. We all are treated equally and can verify it.

Let's start by talking the basics. Mike Sheely, a Postmaster from Pennsylvania, wrote an article this past year and covered most of the information on how Postmasters can make the best of this program. There is talk of the Western Area SOV and CSV models being tweaked and used across the country. All versions being used work off base data and the Remote Office Verification Electronic Retrieval (R.O.V.E.R.) is the tool for this base. Note the name, *Remote Office Verification*, which means often times the data is gathered without ever stepping into your office so your base data is critical to getting good information in to and out of this program.

I am not going to cover every aspect of this program, but I will touch on the most important. Your deliveries and number of routes in your office are two of the most critical elements. Your box section becomes routes based on the number of rented boxes divided by 500. This means that keeping your AMS data accurate and up to date and your WEBBATS current, is crucial.

Volume reporting is also important. Often times they will come to verify what you are reporting is accurate. For the H-L offices the average piece per

Focus: Money, Power and Good Health

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Have you ever asked yourself “how can I obtain good health, increase my financial situation and become more productive in my job?” One of the best ways to achieve this is to boost your self-image. Low self-esteem can negatively affect virtually every part of your life, including your relationships, your job and your health.

According to the Mayo Clinic there are five steps to help improve your self-esteem.

Step 1: Identify troubling conditions or situations.

You need to recognize what is troubling you and write it down. This maybe depression, life changes, a lost promotion. etc. Or you may wish to improve a relationship.

Step 2: Beware of your thoughts. You need to properly identify your thoughts or situations. This may include your self talks. Your thoughts and beliefs may be positive, negative or neutral. They may be rational—based on reason or facts—or irrational—based on false ideas.

Step 3: Challenge negative or inaccurate thinking.

You need to ask yourself if your view of a situation is consistent with facts and logic or whether there might be other explanations. Try to open your mind and look at a situation from all sides.

Step 4: Pinpoint negative thinking. Your negative beliefs can trigger health problems, such as stiff neck, bad back, heart or sleeping problems. It could also effect your concentration, emotions and eating habits.

Step 5: Change your thoughts and beliefs. Try to replace the negative or inaccurate thinking with positive and accurate thinking. This can enable you to find constructive ways to cope and give your self-esteem a boost.



This all sounds good but are you wondering how to accomplish this?

Here are some strategies to help you:

- **Use helpful statements:** Be kind and encouraging to yourself. Try telling yourself “I can handle this new job and I am glad for the opportunity.” Instead of “if I don’t succeed in this job, I’m a total failure.”

- **Don’t dwell on negatives that distort your view of a person or situation or your entire life.** People make mistakes.

Learn to forgive others as well as

yourself. Instead of criticizing yourself

because you made a mistake, recognize it as a mistake and learn from it. Remember, we are human and everyone makes mistakes.

- **Avoid “should” and “must” statements.** These will set unreasonable demands on yourself or others.

- **Focus on the positive.** Think about the good things that have happened in your life. I find that writing down only the positive things in my life will help keep me focused.

Example: Today was a good day, no rate change and not one customer calling to complain about their mail!

These are only a few of the things that could help you find the power, wealth and good health that we all want. Try this new way of thinking. What do you have to lose? Remember to take a day at a time. Work through your bad days and appreciate the good and remember to smile—it makes people wonder what you are up to. •

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delivery for parcel post, letters and flats come from the most recent rural route inspections in your District and is used to convert your rented boxes into working volume. If you are not using a volume recording sheet in your office, you have no way to verify its accuracy.

There are a number of methods being used for LDC 45, your window hours. For POS units the most common method is WOS earned. You need to make sure your SSA’s are using the non-revenue transaction button when appropriate.

For manual units, total revenue is divided by 500 and is converted into transactions and multiplied by a factor; 1.4 is used in the Western Area.

Productivity is very high for the box section and for DPS mail even higher.

Verify that the DPS percent being applied to your office is accurate. Using a District average or goal is often applied even when you do not get all your mail, or in some cases any mail, in DPS order.

We all are responsible for increasing DPS percentage, however if this number is lower because of plant run time or other circumstances not in your control, there is flexibility within the program to change this.

The final element I want to touch on is your Facility Data Base (FDB). This needs to be verified for accuracy and updated any time there is a change. First truck arrival and first employee reporting is a good place to start as well as the clearance time for the box section and hot case. Make sure opening

and closing of the window, and if you have a period you close for lunch, are accurate as well as last dispatch and when the last employee leaves for the day. Saturday or Sunday hours that differ from the Monday-Friday needs to be verified as well.

There are a number of smaller drivers for AWPS that are not covered, but the ones I have mentioned control the largest percent of your earned hours. Unique circumstances, (moms touch on Goulash) are important, and each District handles them differently. They need to be discussed with your MPOO and F4 coordinator.

We will be discussing AWPS more in the future and educating all on how to make the best of what is in our kitchens. •