

MBC Today

The voice of the mail and business center industry since 1982

Volume 25 | Issue 5

September / October 2023

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Las Vegas, NV

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MBCToday

A Publication of
Association of Mail & Business Centers (AMBC)

1125 Bechtel Avenue, Springfield OH 45504
phone: (815) 316-8255 | fax: (866) 314-2672 | ambc4me.org

AMBC Mission:

As a member-run non-profit trade association, our mission is to provide a #MembersHelpingMembers community for businesses in the shipping, mail, and business center industry to connect, learn, and grow.

Building on decades of experience, we believe in always reaching for what's new and what's next, and strive to grow fresh content, programs, and trusted supplier connections that benefit our members...and inspire them to reach their full potential.

Our industry is ever evolving, and we are here to keep you current, viable, and accessible so you can grow and thrive in your communities and in our unique industry. Join us!

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Director of Communication & Advisor to the Board: Marty Johnson

For bios and contact information, please visit ambc4me.org.

MBC Today Editor & Producer: Marty Johnson
Editing Assistance: Julie Young

This Issue's Contributing Writers & Photographers:

Yvonne Hanson | Marielou Ray | Mary Bray
Tommy Armstrong | Crysta Reeves | Seema Mojawalla
Fahim Mojawalla | Norman Froscher | Marty Johnson

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"Shrimps" are little gems of
inspiration and information
peppered throughout *MBC Today*.



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MARCH 7-10, 2024
Las Vegas, NV

AMBC announced in Niagara Falls that we will be hosting an event in Las Vegas at the Westgate Las Vegas Resort and Casino from March 7-10, 2024.

Class schedule to come, but we **will** be having a trade show at this event! We will announce vendor participation as we get sign-ups.

In the meantime, we have opened a special deal for a very limited time. Register now for \$299 for AMBC Members or \$399 for non-members until the end of September. After that date, the price will increase by \$50 per person. You can register at the link below.

AMBC has secured a room rate of \$112/night at the Westgate Las Vegas Resort and Casino. Our hotel block is extended from March 7-13 because ASD will be having their consumer trade show from the 10-13 (<https://asdonline.com/about/dates-hours/>). Now our attendees who want to go to both events don't have to hotel hop. A hotel registration link is also on our event registration page.

We hope to see you in March in Las Vegas!

Information and registration at ambc4me.org/events

A Message From the AMBC Board Chair



Dear Fellow AMBC Members,

AMBC has just wrapped up our third and final regional event of the year, "Retail and Relationships: Reaping Real Results" in Niagara Falls. It was an energetic, entertaining, and educational event that had many of the new store owners as well as several experienced owners buzzing about the content. The hosts, Fahim, Seema, and Marty, are well respected in our industry as both mentors and innovators. We had a panel discussion as well crossing generational lines.

We're also gearing up for our regionals in 2024. During the finale on Sunday, we announced our regional in Las Vegas from March 7th to 10th. We will be dovetailing our event with the ASD show (<https://asdonline.com/about/dates-hours/>) which promises some really cool things for our store owners to see as well. We're really excited about not only the opportunity to involve more of our west coast members, but also about doing something additional that we haven't done before in coordinating with the ASD show. I've been involved with planning AMBC events for several years and I can honestly say I'm more stoked for this event than any of the previous ones.

Inside, you'll find great content in this issue of *MBC Today*, our industry's leading publication. It never ceases to amaze me how Marty pulls everything together. I thank the other board members who contribute articles and our AMBC Trusted Suppliers who help make this possible. Please be sure to check out the articles on our spotlight stores. If you'd like your store highlighted or have an idea for an article, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. After all, we are #membershelpingmembers, and together we are stronger. You can just look at the posts on our AMBC Members Facebook Group to see the camaraderie and mentorship that everyone shares.

Don't miss out on the chance for early bird pricing for Las Vegas. It's going to be epic (I bet you a dollar if you miss it, you'll regret it – see I'm already in a Vegas mindset!)

Thank you, as always, for your trust.

Sincerely,

Norman Froscher

Co-Owner, Espresso Mail

Chief Grump Officer, Grumpy Man Coffee

Board Chair and Director of Engagement, AMBC

#MembersHelpingMembers #WeAreAMBC #AMBC4ME #NormanKnows

"Some situations build character.
Other situations reveal character."
- unknown





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Letter From the Editor

MBC Today



Dear Readers,

When I was in Niagara Falls at the beginning of September working with Seema and Fahim, their son (and my honorary nephew) Yusuf, and their store manager Jasmine to have a dress rehearsal and put final touches on our sold-out "Retail and Relationships: Reaping Real Results" event, I got a call. It was Clark, my store manager, and he was having an issue.

A local artist had come in the store a few minutes earlier and asked Clark to help him carry a piece of artwork from his car into the shop to use our packing service. It was an original piece fresh from our business neighbors at The Frame Shop and, because it was a pastel, had to be carried upright and flat. Clark was happy to help him carry it in, but it was a tight fit to get through the door. The artist, trying to be helpful, reached behind Clark and opened the door wider for him. In the commotion, Clark accidentally whacked the frame into the side of the door, causing damage to the fresh \$400 framing job.

Clark, the outstanding human that he is, apologized and took the blame right away. After calling me, we offered to cover the frame repairs to make it right, so Clark took it right away back to our friends at The Frame Shop. They were able to fix it for half price, less than \$200, and we got it back within a day, packed it up for free as an apology, and the artist was very happy with the resolution.

While Clark wasn't sure if the artist had actually grabbed the frame while he was going through the door causing the accident or if his reaching to help with the door was just the jolt that caused Clark to hit the door, instead of causing contention or a fight, he immediately reacted with apologies and an offer to get it taken care of. Upon reviewing the camera footage, we realized that the artist hadn't grabbed the frame after all and Clark's call was absolutely the right one. I am so proud of him for his humbleness and integrity in that situation. Accidents happen; it's how you react to and resolve them that speaks volumes.

What we do, what we say, and how we treat people absolutely comes back to us. I believe that wholeheart-

edly. I often remind myself to live by the mantra, "Doing the right thing is always the right thing to do." Though I'm certainly not perfect in this, it is surely something I strive for and want to be better at. I don't think it's any accident that the day after we damaged that frame and had it fixed, we landed a \$16K white glove moving job out of the blue.

Our event in Niagara Falls was incredible. The feedback we've received from it has been overflowing our hearts and we are so grateful for all who attended, shared, and gave so that we could all grow together. It was worth all of the hard work the entire AMBC team put into its preparations. You'll read plenty about that event in this issue of *MBC Today*, as the reason we've delayed this issue to drop mid-September instead of the first of the month like we usually do is so we could be sure to include a full recap.

Another reason for this issue's delay is so that we could announce our fabulous March 2024 event: "Getting More Out of '24" in Las Vegas! The official announcement was made by Norman on Sunday in Niagara Falls, and now more details, registration, and hotel links are available at ambc4me.org/events. Please be sure to mark your calendars now for March 7-10, 2024 for what is sure to be a big, bodacious, bona fide bombastic weekend of glitz, glam, great information, networking, and growth.

This issue of *MBC Today* is packed full of awesome, as always. Enjoy!

With care,

Marty Johnson (he/him)

Editor & Producer, *MBC Today*

Owner, Uncle Marty's Shipping Office

Co-Founder, Collegetown Small Business Alliance

Director of Communication & Advisor to the Board, AMBC

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"If it costs you your peace,
it's too expensive." - unknown





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Industry News...

October 17th AMBC Town Hall Meeting on Holiday Preparations

AMBC's next Zoom town hall meeting on holiday preparations will be held on Tuesday, October 17th, at 7:00 p.m. EDT. We'll cover a wide range of topics, including lists and suggestions for AMBC Members to get their businesses ready for the December rush.

To register for it, please email Kim Mahoney at hel-lo@ambc4me.org.

AMBC's 2024 Events

Our full slate of 2024 events, town hall meetings, certified class offerings, and more will be released as soon as it's finalized, but we want everyone to be sure to mark their calendars now for our first event of 2024, "Getting More Out of '24," to be held March 7-10 in Las Vegas! Please visit ambc4me.org/events for all of the details.

Texas House Bill 255 and Notaries Public

Big news for all Texas notaries: the fees have increased from \$6 to \$10, effective September 1, 2023. Due to inflation, the Texas Secretary of State will now adjust the fees every five years. For more information, check out <https://www.nationalnotary.org/knowledge-center/news/law-updates/tx-house-bill-255>

2024 Rate Increases for FedEx and UPS

UPS average rate increase of 5.9% goes into effect December 26th, 2023, and FedEx average 5.9% increase goes into effect January 1, 2024. Check out the following links for more information: <https://www.supplychaindive.com/news/ups-2024-rate-increase-gri-peak-season-surcharges-fees/693103/> and <https://www.supplychaindive.com/news/fedex-express-ground-freight-shipping-rate-increase-2024-gri/692152/>

We always enjoy fresh submissions from AMBC Members for *MBCToday*, a magazine by AMBC Members and for AMBC Members.

We want hear from you! Please send your submissions and suggestions to marty@ambc4me.org.

What's Hot on the AMBC Members Facebook Group

AMBC Members, as a benefit of membership, may participate in the private AMBC Members Facebook Group to network, ask questions, and share ideas.

Here are some recent topics you may have missed:

"Retail and Relationships: Reaping Real Results" Feedback, Photos, and Testimonials

Mailbox Agreement Feedback

FedEx Freight Setup

Holiday Stamp Buying Reminder

AMBC / Go Logistic Webinar

Freight Damage Claim Question

Welcome to New AMBC Members

"Paper and Pallets: a Path to Profit" Feedback, Photos, and Testimonials

Fulfillment Basics

New Store Opening / Funding Question

Return Label Enclosure Discussion

CMRA Web Portal

Emailing Shipping Labels Question

Proof of Address for PMB Rental

Book Recommendation

Happy 50th Birthday, Fahim!

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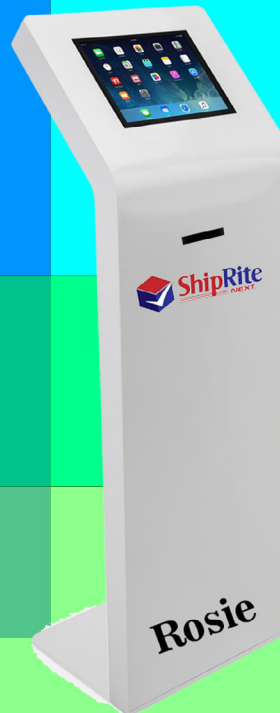


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RETAIL & RELATIONSHIPS

Reaping Real Results

SEPTEMBER 8-10
2023
NIAGARA FALLS, NY

AMBC's grand finale regional event of 2023 was a huge success!

One dear AMBC Member came up to us after the event and told us that they had "felt seen" at this event; that they weren't "just a number" listening to a weekend-long sales pitch, but rather they were engaged and felt listened to, instead of just talked at. They told us that they had never gained so much from any industry event before and that they were going to go back and rethink a lot of what they do at their business as a result. Their words made us emotional, as that's exactly what we intended when we decided to make this event unscripted, open-discussion, and heart-talk enabled.

The participation we experienced gained the three of us far more than we could ever have shared. We learned from each attendee and left with just as many notes ourselves as some others had taken. The family spirit was felt strongly and the camaraderie among AMBC Members with the #Member-sHelpingMembers spirit was incredibly apparent.

We appreciate each and everyone one of you who helped make this event so special. It warms our hearts to hear feedback you've shared, and some of that we'll share here in this official event recap, along with plenty of photos, our welcome letter to attendees, and the full schedule that we somehow managed to pull off...even if on Sunday we had to put the last-minute kibosh on the last class in order to pivot into more time with the generational panel due to popular request.

We want to be sure to thank a few special guests who helped make this event so special:

- Steve Merrick for being an honored guest and sharing from his 30+ years of experience in this industry both as a store owner and as a coach, for sharing during classes, presenting on the importance of an exit strategy, gifting each attendee with a "gratitude" sign as a physical manifestation of what he felt during the event, and participating in our generational panel on Sunday.
- Cindy and Dub Johnson for also being honored guests, sitting in throughout the weekend to lend insight from their 20 years in this industry, and over a decade since their retirement in continuing to advise and guide, and for participating in the generational panel on Sunday to give lessons from their experience and teach younger generations where we've come from.
- Yusuf Mojawalla for all of his work as one of the Island Ship Center hosts, for leading a few sessions during the event, for his insight as a Gen Z team member and future industry leader, and for his participation during the generational panel on Sunday



Event Recap

- Jasmine Truax, Store Manager at Island Ship Center, for also helping lead sessions during the event and for all of the hard work she put into preparing, executing, and guiding.
- Clark Young, Store Manager at Uncle Marty's Shipping Office, for insight he shared during the generational panel on Sunday as one who has had five solid years of experience in this industry and a dedication to shine as a future industry leader.
- Sophia Reeves of Pack & Mail Room and Pack & Mail Plus in Duluth, Minnesota, and Pack & Mail Station in Cloquet, Minnesota, for her wisdom and perspective shared all weekend and especially as a future leader on the generational panel on Sunday.

It took a village to pull off this event. We want to extend our sincere gratitude to the local Niagara Falls and Grand Island restaurateurs at Savor, 773 North, and Ghada Have It! who allowed us to test and plan menus and then totally slay the food, ambiance, and experience as we enjoyed each meal, to the guest speakers, Reverend Geri Grande, Andrea Willis, Anthony Kukovica, and Cheryl Chamberlain who put so much thought and care into what they shared with each attendee, and to our dear sponsors, FedEx, ShipRite Software, Pacific Office Automation, Paychex, AMBC, Island Ship Center, and Uncle Marty's Shipping Office, without whom we couldn't have made this incredibly full event so affordable to its attendees.

Our industry has such a bright future. We were reminded again and again at this event how diverse our members and their businesses are. There's no cookie-cutter model anymore, but each business that is successful caters to their markets in their own individual way. We learned about superpowers and what unique thing each of us have that makes us stand out individually and in our businesses. Sometimes our superpowers aren't obvious, but when recognized can be incredibly powerful.

AMBC's superpower is in its members. It's in the spirit, love, and care each has for each other. It's in the fact that we're a non-profit and not in this to make a buck off of our members, but rather each AMBC board member is doing this on their own volunteer time to direct our organization because they know how much it has benefited them and they want to share that with others and grow together. And our superpower is in the fact that we're a relatively small organization in comparison to other mega trade groups, because we appeal to those who see the value in collaboration and are in on the secret to success: **relationships, relationships, relationships.**

Thank you, attendees, for reminding us of this once again; for giving us huge encouragement, amazing ideas, and a whole lot of love in Niagara Falls. We can't wait until we see you again!

With our love and gratitude,
Seema, Fahim, and Marty, Event Co-Hosts

The Retail and Relationships workshop, sponsored and hosted by Fahim, Seema, and Marty, was the **best** mail center training venue I have ever attended.

Ever.

The **best**.

30+ years.

The **BEST!**

- Steve Merrick



Event Recap continued...



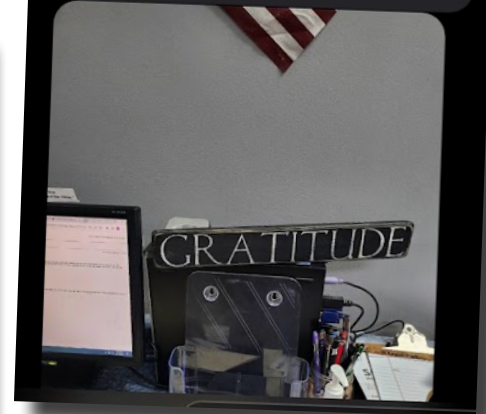
Hey there! This is Steve Ocacio from Tom Ogilvies store! I wanted to make sure I sent you a picture of this on my desk and express my GRATITUDE for all the things you and your family taught me this week. I just got done presenting Tom all the things I learned and the value of what I received and I think he was really impressed with me so I just wanted to tell you again thank you for allowing me to come out there and see everything and giving me a reinvigorated spirit as far as being the best version of me that I can for my store. I look forward to telling you about my continued success in the future!

< **AMBC Members**
Walker Thulson · 2d · 📷

Just wanted to shout out all of the wonderful board members, teachers, organizers, and host of the Retail and Relationships event in Niagara Falls.

As a newcomer to the industry the landscape can often feel vast and overwhelming but with the help of the members of this amazing community it becomes drastically less daunting.

From the informative packing class taught by [Marty Johnson](#) to the retail pricing class taught by [Seema Mojawalla](#) to the tour of Island Shipping and everything in between I'm walking away with an arsenal of new ideas and tools that I can't wait to implement (once I get through the pile of packing projects that accumulated while I was gone). Thank you! Y'all are the best!



Pack & Ship Express · Follow

Top contributor

Yes, same here! Thanks to all of the AMBC Board members that helped put the event together, and to our hosts, [Seema Mojawalla](#), [Fahim Mojawalla](#), and [Marty Johnson](#). Also to all of the sponsors. Such a truly inspiring event! Now we all need to implement what we learned! Nice meeting you [Walker Thulson](#)!



Erich La Barr

I wanted to take a moment to extend my heartfelt gratitude for organizing and orchestrating the exceptional "Retail & Relationships" event. Although my team and I are not newcomers to the world of business, our venture into the realm of shipping brought us here seeking guidance and knowledge, and we left with so much more than we could have imagined.

Words cannot adequately convey the depth of my appreciation for the tremendous amount of time and effort that you and your team poured into making this event a resounding success. Having attended numerous seminars and training events, encompassing a wide spectrum of industries, I can unequivocally declare that this event ranks as an all-time standout.

From inception to conclusion, every facet of the event flowed seamlessly, leaving no room for improvement. Your dedication to ensuring the success of this event is nothing short of awe-inspiring. What struck me most was that your commitment was not driven by any financial gain; it was a pure embodiment of members supporting one another, generously sharing their time and expertise for the betterment of our industry.

In essence, you've exemplified the spirit of camaraderie and mentorship that elevates our community. Thank you, from the depths of my heart, for your selfless contributions and unwavering dedication. Your efforts have undoubtedly left an indelible mark on our business journey, and I am profoundly grateful for the invaluable insights and knowledge we gained.

Please know that your commitment to our collective growth has left an enduring impression on us, and we look forward to continuing our journey with newfound wisdom and inspiration. Thank you once again for your exceptional generosity and for being the driving force behind such an outstanding event.




The conference provided a wealth of knowledge and valuable insights into the shipping industry. The discussions were both informative and engaging. I am already looking forward to the next shipping seminar and eagerly anticipating the opportunity to continue learning and networking! Thank you for your time and effort, and I look forward to our paths crossing again at future events.

Ravinder Singh & Lavleen



Event Recap continued...



 Cher Chams is with Seema Mojawalla and 2 others.
2d ·  

Humbled to speak on behalf of [Seema Mojawalla](#) and [Fahim Mojawalla](#) about the Extraordinary Island Ship Center. Shout out to [Yusuf Mojawalla](#) and Cousin Marty!



Welcome letter shared with all attendees:

Dear Honored Guests,

As your weekend co-hosts, it is our true privilege to welcome you to Niagara Falls for "Retail and Relationships: Reaping Real Results." At this ***sold-out*** final AMBC regional event of 2023, we want to emphasize what we feel is the most important aspect of our businesses: relationships.

This is not your mother's regional industry weekend event. There will be no exhaustive bulleted slideshows, but rather only a few talking points and visuals to springboard conversations. There will be no hard-sell sales pitches or course presenters droning on from a podium, but rather almost every session will be an inclusive group-wide discussion. Our goal for this weekend is to talk with you, not at you, and to show by example after example how investing in relationship building with each other, with your communities, with your vendors, and with your team is one of the most valuable assets you can put effort into building.

We capped the attendance for this event at 50 people, as we did with other AMBC regional events this year, to keep it intimate, keep it conversational, and keep it focused to provide the most value possible for those wise enough to sign up early and make plans to attend. Due to its popularity, we extended this attendance capacity to 60, but stopped there so we could keep our commitment to quality.

We hope that the value we aim to give this weekend exceeds your expectations.

We're so glad you're here.

Let's begin...

Gratefully yours,
Seema, Fahim, and Marty

"And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."

- Anaïs Nin



"A person's ability to grow is directly related to the amount of truth they can accept about themselves."

- unknown



Event Recap continued...

Official event schedule:

Thursday Evening, September 7th

5 p.m. – 9 p.m. AMBC certified shipping course

Location: Island Ship Center, 1879 Whitehaven Road, Grand Island NY

Must be signed up for separately for those interested as a come-early-add-on for the event.

Friday, September 8th

9 a.m. – 1 p.m. AMBC certified packing course

Location: Island Ship Center, 1879 Whitehaven Road, Grand Island NY

Must be signed up for separately for those interested as a come-early-add-on for the event.

3 p.m. Check-in begins at hotel

Location: DoubleTree by Hilton, 401 Buffalo Ave, Niagara Falls NY

3 p.m. – 5 p.m. Daytime falls viewing and Maid of the Mist boat tour of Niagara Falls

Walking group leaves from hotel at 3:15 p.m. Please meet in the hotel lobby to join. Rides will be provided for those who are unable for the short walk.

Maid of the Mist tickets are provided by AMBC at no additional cost to event attendees.

6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Social with gourmet dinner and meet and greet at Savor Restaurant

Location: Savor Restaurant in the Falls, 28 Old Falls St, Niagara Falls NY

Social generously sponsored by **Pacific Office Automation**

Gourmet dinner generously sponsored by **FedEx**

Savor is part of the Niagara Culinary Institute. They've dedicated the night in the restaurant space just for AMBC, including a custom menu and special linens, in gratitude for the relationship they have with our hosts from Island Ship Center.

*Semi-formal **purple attire encouraged** to recognize FedEx for all that they do for AMBC and our industry.*

Walking group leaves from hotel at 5:45 p.m. Please meet in the hotel lobby to join. Rides will be provided for those who are unable for the short walk.

9 p.m. – 10 p.m. Walk to the falls for night view of lights after dinner

Walking group leaves from Savor at 9 p.m. Rides will be provided for those who are unable for the short walk.

Saturday, September 9th

7 a.m. – 7:50 a.m. Breakfast and welcome

Lead by AMBC Board Chair **Norman**

Location: DoubleTree by Hilton, 401 Buffalo Ave, Niagara Falls NY

Breakfast sponsored by **AMBC**

8 a.m. – 8:50 a.m. Resilient Relationships: Investing in Little Gestures for Big Results

Session led by **Fahim** and **Marty**

A series of examples, stories, and adages from Seema, Fahim, Marty, Yusuf, and other weekend attendees, including the AMBC board and staff, about how small gestures plant seeds that often can grow into big accounts and incredibly important connections to open doors. We'll talk about the importance of investing in your guests, clients, drivers, vendors, communities, teams, and industry by building resilient relationships.

9 a.m. – 9:50 a.m. Properly Value Your Time, Service, Expertise, and Excellence

Session led by **Yusuf**

Focus, focus, focus! If you took Fahim's "Let it Go to Grow" class at Meetup in Memphis in 2022, you'll love this follow-up session led by his coworker, middle child, and future industry leader, Yusuf, that will really drill down on the powerful profits that lie on narrowing down our audience to serve those that are truly the best match for our services and that pay for the value we provide.

10 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. Excellence Exercise: Engage Your Superpower

Session led by **Yusuf**

There's an old adage, "Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life." In this session, we'll explore what unique thing that each of us really shine at. What are the core products and services that we enjoy doing the most, that we're passionate about, and that we do better than anyone else in our areas? That's what our focus should be. We can only go so far by being just another option, but by finding what makes us really stand out we can exponentially grow and shine in our communities.

11 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. Reaping Real Results Regardless of a Recession

Session led by **Fahim** and **Marty**

Only when we spend our time investing in relationships before a recession (or pandemic) will we reap benefits during a recession (or pandemic), when people tend to primarily

(or only, in some cases) do business with those they trust. During a recession, money is so tight to begin with that most people don't want to take a risk on spending it on a new business or one that doesn't have a trusted reputation in the marketplace (source: Alex Hormozi). How can you set yourself up with a loyal client base to be resilient during the next recession?

12 p.m. – 12:50 p.m. Lunch

Generously sponsored by **Paychex**

During lunch, we're thrilled that Paychex will give a presentation on what they can offer event attendees and AMBC Members.

1 p.m. – 1:50 p.m. Details Matter: How You Present Yourself and Your Business

Session led by **Seema** and **Marty** with special guest via zoom, **Andrea Willis**, business attorney from Florida and friend and client of Island Ship Center

What first impression are you giving your guests? What do they notice when they drive up? When they enter your doors? What visual hits them? How does your store smell? What do they see and hear? How does your staff greet them, and how do they invite them to come back when the sale is over? What does your staff wear? What's your social media and web presence like? How about your reviews?

2 p.m. – 2:50 p.m. Retail Pricing Strategies

Session led by **Seema**

Seema will provide an overview of her pricing strategy for retail items and share Island Ship Center's email stats from November and December 2022 sales. Be sure to take Seema's advice on how to price higher, allowing you the flexibility to discount and provide more perceived value when needed. We'll also discuss Island Ship Center's "VIP Box Club," which we launched this year, allowing our VIP guests 20% off on all boxes and packaging supplies purchased from us. It's working quite well!

3 p.m. – 3:50 p.m. New Retail Profit Centers

Session led by **Seema** and **Fahim**

Seema and Fahim will discuss their Canadian package holding business, which has just taken off, as well as the need for contracts and pricing high to weed out the "nickel and dimers." Always ask the client what they want, sample it out, then add more. Don't buy a lot in the beginning. Test, test, test, then implement slowly. They'll even share some of their own contracts with you as a gift!

4 p.m. – 4:50 p.m. Be Frugal, Not Cheap

Session led by **Yusuf** and Island Ship Center Store Manager **Jasmine**

*Ben Franklin once said, "Beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship." It's essential to constantly watch those small expenses. In this session, we'll show examples of how Island Ship Center generated \$5,000 in bottom line revenues without sacrificing service after assessing expenses like payroll, Podium phone calls, and more. We'll also discuss Will Guidara's 95/5 rule in the book *Unreasonable Hospitality*, where 95% of your resources are spent in controlling costs so that you can splurge on 5% of your resources to make amazing memories, like paid birthdays off for your team, team member excursions, and more!*

5 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Reviewing Reviews

Session led by **Fahim** and **Marty**

Responsiveness is essential on social media, especially when it comes to responding to positive reviews. It's as essential to respond to positive reviews as it is to negative ones because it takes much more effort for people to write positive sentiments online than it does negative, toxic comments. We'll discuss experiences with Podium.com and also offer low cost, but high value, solutions in adding web chat buttons to members' websites.

6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m. Dinner at 773 North

Location: 773 North, 2749 Grand Island Boulevard, Grand Island NY

Generously sponsored by **ShipRite Software**

Meet at hotel lobby at 6 p.m. to break out into carpool groups to get to restaurant.

Sunday, September 10th

7 a.m. – 7:30 a.m. Rides to Island Ship Center

Meet in hotel lobby at 7 a.m. to break into carpool groups to get to Island Ship Center

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast

Sponsored by your hosts, **Seema**, **Fahim**, and **Marty** as a thank you for attending, participating, and helping them grow as much as they hope to help you grow.

During breakfast, AMBC Board Chair Norman will announce exciting plans for a west coast AMBC event that will take place in March of 2024

8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. Island Ship Center tour and break-out sessions

*We'll break into five groups to spend 15 minutes each at five break-out stations while seeing the entire Island Ship Center operation. **Fahim** will be in the dedicated print room to talk all things print; **Seema** will be in Seema Boutique (the retail area at Island Ship Center) to talk retail; **Jasmine** will be in the office area to talk*

Event Recap continued...

about digital mail and back-end office operations; **Yusuf** will be in the 24-hour mailbox and business center to talk about its role in their company; **Marty** and **Clark** will be in the packing area to talk about storage and packaging relationship building.

9:45 a.m. – 10 a.m. Rides to Western New York Welcome Center

Location: 1999 Alvin Road, Grand Island NY

10:15 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. Storytelling: Put on a Show or They're Not Gonna Show

Session led by **Fahim** and **Marty**

Why do people visit your business? Do they come for the service? For the products? Or for the experience? We argue that all three play a role, but the experience is what really will sets you apart. How do you engage with your guests? What will wow them so they want to come back again and again, and tell all of their friends? We'll dig into some tips and tricks to make your store not just a store, but a stage!

11 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. Generational Panel Discussion: Past, Present, and Future of Our Industry

Discussion facilitated by AMBC Board Chair **Norman**

Special guests Cindy and Dub Johnson, retired industry veterans who operated three successful stores in New York in the 1990s and early 2000s, along with industry veteran Steve Merrick, who operated a successful store in Wheeling, West Virginia during the same time period and who afterwards have been renowned industry coaches, share their views of where the industry has come from, what they did right, and what they would have done differently in hindsight. Then, middle-aged current store owners and your weekend co-hosts Marty, Seema, and Fahim share information on what they've seen in their long tenures in the industry and their perspective on origins and destinations for our businesses. Finally, Gen Z members and future industry leaders Sophia Reeves, Clark Young, and Yusuf Mojawalla will share their opinions on what could be possible, next, and the future of an ever-changing industry. These three separate generational perspectives may seem very different, but in this panel we'll have a great discussion to understand them all and really get a good picture of where we all stand and what could be next.

12 p.m. – 1 p.m. Lunch and farewell

Sponsored by **AMBC**

Boxed lunches provided by Ghada Have It!, a local Niagara Falls Mediterranean home cooking restaurant where the owner has prepared a special catering box just for our event, featuring both falafel wraps and chicken wraps.

Book suggestion:

Prosper Formula

7 Tactical Ingredients That Compound to Double Your Profit in as Little as 90 Days Without Spending More Money on Marketing

by Edward C. Hill



"If you must look back, do so forgivingly. If you must look forward, do so prayerfully. However, the wisest thing you can do is be present in the present...gratefully."

- Maya Angelou



Seema Mojawalla has a unique viewpoint that is fresh, forward-thinking, and focused. She has a passion for finding the perfect products to sell at Seema Boutique, located within the Spa of Shipping, Island Ship Center, an experience-based retail shipping spa five miles south of Niagara Falls in Grand Island, New York, which she co-owns with her husband Fahim. #QueenofRetail



Fahim Mojawalla is a social media mentor known for his love of hashtags. A former AMBC Board Chair, he now serves as Advisor to the Board and ex officio Director of Motivation. Along with his wife Seema, Fahim is an effervescent co-owner of Island Ship Center, the Spa of Shipping. #FahimFix



Marty Johnson (he/him) is a shopkeeper, wordsmith, mentor, and survivor. He owns Uncle Marty's Shipping Office in Ithaca, New York, runs the Collegetown Small Business Alliance, volunteers as ex officio Director of Communication and Advisor to the Board for AMBC, and serves as Editor and Producer of MBC Today. Learn more at askunclemarty.com. #AskUncleMarty

#Tidbits *Brief tips, tricks, and hacks*

The Cutty Downy Thingy by Marty Johnson

There's a tip I share in every AMBC certified shipping and AMBC certified packing course that I lead, and that's the value of a box sizer (a.k.a. "cutty downy thingy") at your front counter.

As I also state in nearly every article, letter, course, and piece I share, we are in the business of relationships, and the value of one client's lifetime business and advocacy because you treat them right and fairly is worth exponentially more than a single transaction could ever be.

So, at Uncle Marty's Shipping Office, we always try to find the best option for each guest, and often that means that we will cut a box that is too large down so it saves them shipping cost and also ensures safer transit. But, we don't cut it down right away. Here's the trick:

We first take their box, just as they brought it in,

and put it on the scale. We do the normal shipment process with weights, measurements, destination, value questions, etc., and show them what the rates are. Then, we say something like, "It feels like your box may not be completely full. Do you mind if I take a look and see if we can save any cost by cutting it down a bit?" And usually they'll respond with a resounding, "Yes, please!"

We open their box and measure how far we can cut it down, and then adjust the size in ShipRite to show them how much it will save. Then, in front of them, we whip out the cutty downy thingy and show them how neatly and professionally and quickly we can make that happen. They are always entertained and amazed by the tool itself, as well as our proficiency at it, which in their minds instills our position as the go-to shipping professionals, but also the fact that we went out of our way to save them money will be remembered...and likely shared with their friends. It's the perfect way to gain a lifetime advocate as a client and build a relationship that will be worth far more than those few dollars we could have made by shipping their box at a larger size.

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RS Expo 2023

by Tommy Armstrong and Crysta Reeves



The start of September saw another successful industry event put on by the Retail Shipping Associates. RS Expo 2023 in Dallas, Texas saw record attendance with over 500 attendees including industry veterans with 30+ years of experience operating successfully and even brand new store owners who have opened their new stores less than 30 days prior.

Every attendee was sure to take something home with them to help make them successful and continue to grow their store going forward. There were vendor specific trainings that took place throughout the entire four-day event, lots of targeted topic breakout presentations lead by successful store owners and respected industry vendor partners, and of course a full day vendor trade show with dozens of vendors in attendance, which allowed every attendee to experience what all of these vendor partner have to offer to help make their stores a success.

All of this opportunity to learn about industry vendor partners, expand knowledge on relevant industry topics, network with hundreds of friends, colleagues, and fellow store owners sharing ideas, experiences, and best practices made for another successful RS Expo in 2023.

Thank you to Retail Shipping Associates for organizing and putting on another stellar industry event to help make the pack and ship community of stores revved up for another great year!



Tommy Armstrong has been an outstanding AMBC Member for many years and a friendly, familiar face at industry events across the country. In 2023, he joined the AMBC Board of Directors as Director of Business Diversification. He owns War-wington Business Center and More Ink for Less in Pensacola, Florida.



Crysta Reeves is the proud owner of three shipping stores located in Northern Minnesota communities, as well as AMBC Board Vice Chair and Director of Social Media. She also operates NorthlandCheerheads.com, expanding her businesses into the printing market and support her three kids' school activities in a fun way.



A Holiday Prep Reminder

by Norman Froscher

Have you been naughty or nice for the upcoming holidays?

2023 is moving at a rapid pace. Can you believe it's already September? The holiday season will be here before you can blink or finish reading this article. In the last couple of years, because of supply chain issues, AMBC has held a town hall meeting in July or early fall to remind you not to wait on your holiday prep. While we aren't holding a virtual meeting to discuss this in 2023, this is your pre-holiday reminder to get your act together so that you're ready for not only the increased foot traffic but are prepared to win those customers over for the rest of the year.

First and foremost, even though shipping has softened across the board, now is the time to make sure you have plenty of shipping supplies: labels, tape, envelopes, and carrier branded supplies for those that you use. If you start ordering now, you won't get caught in a bind or receive those nasty emails that your order exceeds your normal quantities. We look at our past couple of holiday seasons and our KPIs to see what increases to expect. We generally are running about 15% over the previous year, so we plan accordingly.

Hopefully, when you planned your annual marketing, you set aside a budget for your busiest time of the year. Now is a good time to review your plan. How do you market for the holidays? EDDM, radio ads, coupon books, or social media boosted posts? If what you did last year didn't work, why not mix it up a little and try something different? A few years ago, we had a pop-up event for small businesses on Small Business Saturday and allowed other small businesses in our community to set up a table in our store at no charge and promote their products. If you're already carrying a locally made product, this is a great way to continue to cement that relationship and enforce the mindset that you are community-driven.

A day with Santa, a sign spinner, or a pet adoption with a local shelter are other out of the box ideas that may also generate traffic for you. Make sure you have plenty of brochures, flyers, and business cards illustrating your services. Having a giveaway item with your logo or store info is helpful not only now, but especially since those items are generally kept for a longer time, stretching your marketing dollars.

If you're carrying retail and gift items, now is the time to order those. Do you carry certain holiday-themed items as well? Take this opportunity to maybe bring in something new and different. Just make sure it fits with your brand and demographics. All year long, we try bringing in new and different products.

Whether you go all out on the holiday hall decking or opt for a minimal approach, consider moving

things around to refresh your look (we do this monthly just to give our store a new look for our established customers). With the new products we bring in, this encourages people to walk around and shop longer.

Lastly, make sure you have the systems in place to capture emails, phone numbers, and other information so that you can market to the new customers next year. Invite them to follow your social media accounts...and to leave you Google reviews. We have QR codes all over the store. Don't be bashful about asking for it. People generally only leave a review when they're upset, so it's a good idea to ask for positive ones. We make it easy for them to do so before they leave the store.

Here's hoping this holiday season is your best yet. Feel free to reach out to any of the AMBC board members with your questions.



Norman Froscher and his wife Lisa co-own Espresso Mail in West Palm Beach, Florida, and Norman serves on the AMBC Board of Directors as Director of Engagement and Board Chair. When he's not packing, shipping, or printing, he's looking for a good cup of coffee or espresso, which makes it really convenient that he has a coffee bar in his store. #NormanKnows

"Proceed as if success is inevitable"
- unknown



Book recommendation
The E Myth Revisited
Why Most Small Businesses
Don't Work and What to Do About It
by Michael E. Gerber





Hi. My name is Yvonne Hanson, owner of Postal & Global Services in Wellington, Florida. I am looking forward to celebrating 16 years in the industry in January of 2024.

When I first visited the store in late 2007, it was only a six month old store, and part of a franchise. The business was flailing badly because the owner was unsure of how to operate a pack and ship store, even though he was part of a franchise system. At that time I was a Realtor and notary signing agent, and recognizing that the real estate market was tanking, I was seeking a new business opportunity. The owner of the store was very frustrated and looking to get out of the business. We went back and forth for a while because I was not willing to get into a franchise. The store ended up closing its doors in January of 2008 and I immediately jumped on the opportunity to reopen the location as an independent.

I was also brand new to this industry, but had been an entrepreneur for more than 25 years at that time. I immediately dived into research on this type of business and collected all the information I could get about the mail and parcel business. I found out about seminars, expos, training, and traveled a few times a year to different events to gather as much information as I could. Over the years I have made many friends at AMBC, and I am always amazed at how kind and helpful people in this industry really are.

A combination of timing, luck, and determination has made my business very successful, along with a great team, who are my best assets. My dedicated, reliable, and loyal team consists of Alexia, Dominique, Kayanna, Leihla, Melody, Yasmin, and me. We are kept pretty busy by our dedicated customers and almost 700 very active mailbox holders. We are also very well known in our community for our box inventory. We currently carry over 120 sizes, always in stock. Just try to imagine that in a less than 1000 square feet of space. We make use of every inch of real estate.

We are growing and looking forward to opening another location just in time for the 2023 holiday shipping season. Thanks to AMBC for the continued support and enormous resources provided to us, its members.





Yvonne



Dominique



Lex



Melody
Kayanna
Yvonne



Alexia
Melody

"Don't look
at your feet
to see if you
are doing it right.
Just dance."

- Anne Lamott



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AND Business Center



The idea of owning my own business was always a dream. My background was in big box retail management with a degree in teaching. Additionally, my family, on both parents' sides, owned their own businesses.

While living in New Orleans in 2005 there was this big life-changing storm called Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the entire city of New Orleans. Life was very different from that day forward. The time for a change and the pursuit of starting my own business began.

I found a newspaper ad for a The UPS Store. That seemed like a good way to start. After looking into the details, it was clear that The UPS Store option was not for me. The dream then turned to pursuing the independent route. I found a turn-key setup through a business broker and Pack Rat Shipping Services was born.

I hired my first employee before I opened, and we went through the initial training together. We opened the doors in April of 2006 and have not looked back. Her only concern and stipulation was that if we were not busy enough, she was out.

The first location was just under 1000 square feet in space and located on a busy part of

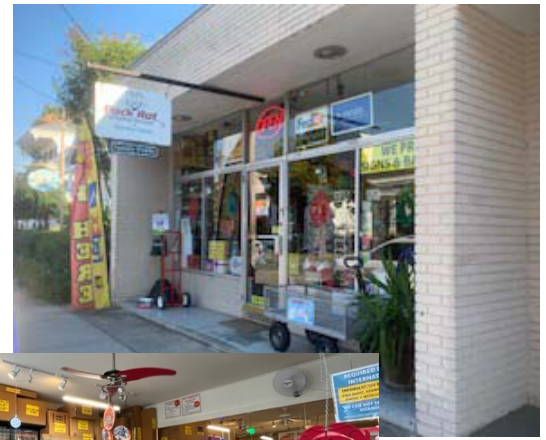
Magazine Street, which is known as the Irish Channel. This area of town is famous for its eclectic shops, art galleries, and antiques. No grand opening, no fluff, we just opened the doors and went to work.

We spent 10 years in the original location before moving when our lease expired. It was good timing as we were busting at the seams and in need of more space. We did not want to move far, as we now had an extremely loyal clientele. Luckily, we were able to secure a larger space three and a half blocks away and still on Magazine Street.

New Orleans is a big little city consisting of lots of small neighborhoods. This very short move took us into a new neighborhood known as the Garden District.

This move made a dramatic difference by exposing us to a whole new customer base. We experienced a growth of new customers, who were newly discovering us, as well as maintaining all the original customers too!

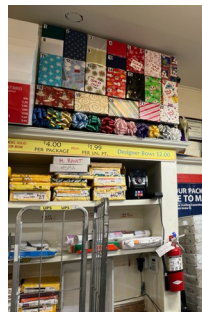
Now we are delighted to begin our 17th year. We are excited to have expanded into a space, adjacent to our current location, and celebrating our ability to be growing again.



Original Location



New Location



Allie

Our operation consists of six employees on staff and one shop dog, Allie, who has her own fan club. The very first hire, who didn't want to be bored, is still with me! I guess we managed to get a few things right!

Our uniforms are crazy tie-dye shirts, which always make people smile. The tie-dye for uniforms was something to cheer people up during COVID and we have kept it because it brings such a fun vibe. Our goal is to have fun every day and provide excellent customer service!

Chase your dreams, you never know where they will take you.

- Marielou Ray

"Success is an accumulation of successful days." - fortune cookie



"The secret to successful hiring is to look for the people who want to change the world." - unknown



Oops!

We all make mistakes. Share yours, along with what you did to resolve it, so we can all learn and grow together.

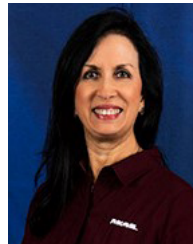
Where's My Package?

We have an agreement with DHL to receive packages at our store for people who otherwise find it difficult to receive packages. This is one way we can get more foot traffic and bring awareness to potential new guests. DHL sends them an alert when we get the package delivered. Then, they come to pick it up. We always ask for ID.

We received a package under a name that was almost identical to the name of one of our PMB clients and mistakenly checked it in under that PMB. So, when the rightful owner

of the package came to pick it up and said he got an alert from DHL that we had received his package, we were perplexed because it was not found in the usual spot where we hold DHL packages for non-PMB clients. We told the guest we didn't have the package and he left. He later came back with a rep from DHL on his phone. The rep had called the driver and he had confirmed that in fact the package had been delivered. At that point, I really started to wonder and I went to check everywhere where we hold packages for our PMB clients. Sure enough, the package had been checked in incorrectly.

The moral of the story is triple triple-check everything before checking it in.



Mary Bray is the owner of Pak Mail Thorpe Lane in San Marcos, Texas and shines as a leader and innovator among her peers. She serves as Director of Innovation on the AMBC Board of Directors, always ready with fresh ideas and perspectives.



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episode 1464

"The 5 Questions To Test Your
Courage & Step Into Your
FULL Potential"



"May your choices reflect your
hopes, not your fears."
- Nelson Mandela



Book suggestion
*A Woman's Guide
to Claiming Space*
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