

## SHE'S GOT MAIL

“I always saw my dad work hard every day. My parents always instilled in me the ethic that you work first and play later.”

— KELLY HEROLD-MARTINEZ, chief executive of XPO in Torrance



Brad Graverson/Staff Photographer

Kelly Herold-Martinez, with four colleagues, founded Torrance-based mailing company Express Postal Options International, known as XPO, in 2003. She says XPO has now grown to 45 full-time employees and about 40 weekly temps. Her company projects \$30 million in sales this year.

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## Torrance postal service gets stamp of approval from customers

By **Muhammed El-Hasan**  
Staff Writer

Kelly Herold-Martinez makes mailing a letter sound complicated.

The way she approaches postal service, it really is more complex than dropping an envelope into the corner mailbox.

Herold-Martinez, 46, serves as chief executive of Express Postal Options International, a Torrance-based mailing company. Known as XPO, the private firm has about 500 customers in various fields including Fortune 500 companies and universities.

"At XPO, it's not boring," Herold-Martinez said. "Everybody's different, and you get to meet a lot of people and get to know a lot of industries."

The girl who grew up in Chino dreaming of entering the well-known profession of teaching now heads a company whose services are unfamiliar to most people.

Founded in 2003 by Herold-Martinez and four colleagues, XPO helps companies save time and money on their mailings.

XPO can pick up a client's mail — from postcard advertisements and magazines to health-care directories and DVDs — and handle the mail processing and other logistics.

The company also gives its clients advice.

"We might advise them (on) what the mail piece is going to look like," she explained. "We advise them on what size would be most advantageous to take advantage of discounts. ... We'll customize whatever our routing is, depending on the cost they want."

A company may plan a marketing mailing with hopes of receiving responses beginning on a certain date.

"So we back into that date and tell them when's the best time to mail it," Herold-Martinez said.

The Torrance company also gives advice on

## BUSINESS LIVES

**NAME:** Kelly Herold-Martinez

**POSITION:** Chief executive of Express Postal Options International in Torrance

**AGE:** 46

**CITY OF RESIDENCE:** Redondo Beach

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor's degree in business administration from Cal Poly Pomona in 1984.

**FAMILY:** Husband Hector Martinez, and two cats, Marley and Priscilla.

**HOBBIES:** Watching USC football games, playing golf, traveling, cooking, spending time at the beach.

which country a client should mail from. Depending on what is to be mailed and postal costs, it may be a better option to ship the mailings to, say England, and then drop them off at the post office there, she said.

XPO also can offer its clients discounts that average 20 percent to 30 percent on mailings because of the Torrance firm's negotiated agreements with various postal authorities.

XPO receives discounts for shipping in bulk, sorting mailings, tagging international mail, bagging the items, verifying destination addresses for domestic service and printing bar codes.

All this saves post offices time, and XPO receives a discount in return.

"Because we're taking all of our customers and consolidating it, we get a better discount than doing it one at a time," she said.

Sometimes shipping to another country, where items are then mailed, has more to do

with marketing. For example, one of XPO's direct marketing clients sells to Canada and therefore wants its mailers postmarked from that country.

XPO also has cultural insight that can affect a client's mailing decisions.

"For example, in Europe in August, people are often traveling, so we say August is not a good time to mail it," she said.

For a small number of clients, XPO performs "picking and packing."

"Universities will send us an e-mail saying, 'Send this letter and brochure with a pen to these people,'" she said. "We already have the stuff here."

The Torrance company also can perform special financial reporting, such as billing a client's individual departments or providing detailed reports to help a client bill its own customers, she said.

When XPO first opened, the company only handled international mailing, adding domestic service two years ago.

XPO faces competition from the mailing departments of large courier companies such as UPS, DHL and FedEx, as well as smaller firms.

"When we first started, it was just starting out as an unknown company," she said. "On the first day, we go to the office and the phone isn't ringing."

Then the company took a large job, and things started moving forward.

"We ... started with five partners and three employees," Herold-Martinez recalled. "We got a real big job our first Friday, and we all went back and started mailing and trying to get the job done. It was great team building."

Since then, XPO has grown to about 45 full-time employees and about 40 weekly temps.

The company outgrew its original

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# POSTAL

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6,000-square-foot site, and in July moved to its current headquarters with 21,000 square feet of space that includes a large mail room on the first floor.

XPO generated \$21.6 million in sales last year, Herold-Martinez said, with projected sales of \$30 million this year.

The firm operates 24 hours a day Monday through Friday, and also works on Saturday.

That means Herold-Martinez puts in long hours.

"I think I'm kind of an over-achiever. I think I've always been that way, just driven and ambitious," she said. "I've always set goals for myself and worked to achieve."

She credits her parents' example for her own work ethic. Her father worked as a systems analyst in the aerospace industry and her mother was a homemaker for many years before taking a job at a school district.

"I always saw my dad work hard every day," she said. "My parents always instilled in me the ethic that you work first and play later."

The elder of two daughters, she helped pay her way through business classes at Cal Poly Pomona with an administrative job at a travel agency run by a friend's parents.

After earning her bachelor's degree in business administration, Herold-Martinez took a corporate sales job at Avis Rent a Car in Inglewood.

"It was a great job because it had great sales training," she said.

After her boss at Avis moved to an interna-

tional courier company called TNT, Herold-Martinez followed. She worked in sales there for nine years, then with some of her colleagues took jobs at a smaller firm called International Postal Consultants, or IPC. Herold-Martinez was vice president of sales for the western region.

Philip Privitere, who owned IPC at the time, remembers Herold-Martinez as a "consummate people person."

"She is one of the best sales executives I've ever seen when it comes to managing egos, (and) many sales people seem to have big egos," Privitere said.

For example, in the five years she worked for Privitere, Herold-Martinez had no employee turnover, which is unheard of in sales, he said.

"She was spectacular," he said. "She was the primary reason our company gained a national presence. Before we hired her, we were primarily an East Coast company."

Privitere eventually sold IPC to Deutsche Post, a German postal, logistics and courier company that owns DHL.

Herold-Martinez and some of her colleagues were unhappy with the corporate feel of the new company, which they felt did not give enough personalized attention to the customer.

So Herold-Martinez, three fellow sales executives and a general manager of operations at Deutsche Post began planning their new company. They left Deutsche Post the day before starting XPO in 2003.

"We really try to understand what a customer wants and (what) is important to them and their business, and develop a solution that meets their needs," Herold-Martinez said of XPO. "What we really strive for is personal attention."

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