

Price or quality? It's your choice

Written by Joel P. Longares
Friday, 04 November 2011 16:44



When spring comes after a long winter, you try to spruce up your garden with new plants and what do you see?

Weeds sprouting all over, competing for water and nutrients with newly planted flowering plants and your lawn.

It's the equivalent of spring in the balikbayan box industry this time of the year and guess what you see?

Scores of balikbayan box companies suddenly emerging from hibernation during the lean months and now out to get their share of the blooming market of balikbayan box senders who are expected to send thousands of boxes to their loved ones in the Philippines in time for the holidays.

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Don't get me wrong.

I'm not against cargo companies competing for the attention of Filipino customers.

This is after all a free market, and everyone is entitled to a share of the business.

What worries me is the cutthroat competition that emerges every time it's the peak season for balikbayan boxes.

Because many of these small companies did not devote time, hard work, dedication, experience and expertise to win the loyalty of their customers, many of them rely on the unfair and destructive practice of lowering their prices to unbelievable levels to get their share of the market.

There is nothing illegal in the practice, of course, this being a free market.

But by bringing down their prices to dangerously low levels, they are not only causing irreparable damage to the industry, they are also putting their customers' precious gifts to their family and friends at great risk.

To earn a profit, these companies have to cut corners somewhere.

It's like an unscrupulous contractor who offers a lower price but uses substandard materials and hires inexperienced workers to do the job.

He is after all in the business to make money, not to appease customers.

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The same goes for some cargo companies.

They would lower their price, but hire inexperienced workers who do not know how to properly pack, strap and load boxes.

Never mind that the boxes and their contents are often damaged, delayed, pilfered, or lost.

Many of these companies do not even have their own warehouse or personnel, and just bring their customers' boxes to bigger companies, who couldn't care less about how the boxes are handled and delivered because the boxes are not their responsibility anyway.

Because the senders who turn to them for their unbelievably low price eventually end up frustrated and angry, the image of the balikbayan box industry is irreparably damaged.

The whole industry loses the trust of many of the customers, all because some unscrupulous operators wanted to make a fast buck.

But the biggest losers are the customers.

Because many of these companies offering very low prices do not have the right personnel and the resources to ensure proper and timely delivery, the customers' boxes often end up damaged and undelivered on the date promised.

Worse, some boxes end up pilfered, missing or lost.

We must remind customers that the most important thing to consider in sending balikbayan

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boxes is the choice of the cargo company that would handle and deliver your boxes.

Because you put so much time, money and effort filling up and packing those boxes, you must make sure that you entrust those boxes to a reliable and experienced cargo forwarder.

The company must be licensed by the Federal Maritime Commission and bonded, meaning they have insurance to cover any liabilities emerging from mishandling or for any loss or theft.

More importantly, they must have the experience and expertise to handle your cargo properly.

Why would you want to save a few dollars and risk the chance of your family receiving your gift boxes way after Christmas, or worse, the items inside either damaged or missing?

As they say, you get what you pay for.

For a few dollars more, you could get quality service and you can sleep well at night knowing that your boxes are in good hands, and that your family will get them in a timely manner and in perfect condition.

Price or quality service?

It's your choice.

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