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# How to Improve Mailing Productivity

## Mail Processing and the Digital Workflow

White  
Paper



# INTRODUCTION

Mail is vital to the smooth operation of any business. Sending mail in a timely fashion is important because it directly affects cash flow and new business generation as well as the quality of an organization's relationships with customers, suppliers and employees. The speed and accuracy with which invoices, contracts, statements, reminders, marketing material and other business-critical mail is processed can have a major effect on every business activity.

This is especially true today because most business activities rely on a combination of digital and paper-based information. In order to maximize efficiency, mail processing must keep up and integrate with digital workflows: if it takes minutes to arrange a loan or take out insurance online, customers won't be prepared to wait days for the necessary paperwork to arrive.

The first step in maximizing efficiency in your mail process is to identify where the issues are and take steps to improve productivity.

## BOTTLENECKS AND DELAYS

Organizations that rely on manual processes for opening and distributing business communications or for processing outgoing mail, risk creating bottlenecks that could impair their competitiveness, reputation and profitability.

Processing mail by hand is slow, expensive and an unwelcome distraction for employees who might be co-opted to open the morning post or stuff envelopes for marketing campaigns or invoice runs. It can also lead to mistakes and inaccuracies, from applying too much or too little postage to inserting the wrong letter in an envelope.

## BE MORE PRODUCTIVE

Automating mail processing can help businesses eradicate such inefficiencies and be more productive. Research shows that even an entry-level folder-inserter can fill envelopes at least 13 times faster than by hand and an automatic letter opener can open 2,500 envelopes in less time than it takes to open 38 manually. Combining letter opening with scanning and digital distribution can bring even greater efficiency gains, while postage meters that weigh letters and automatically apply the correct postage in an uninterrupted process dramatically reduce the time needed to prepare bundles of mixed mail for postage.

Solutions that make use of powerful software to streamline an entire process take mailing efficiency to a higher level and enable users to personalize and control



communications in ways that would not be possible if done by hand. From automatically varying envelope insertions for each addressee to selecting a distribution method (mail, email or fax) to suit customers' preferences, modern mailing solutions are a necessary complement to effective communication strategies.

Automating mail production and processing can bring costs savings through reduced manpower and more efficient mailing choices. The potential productivity gains are equally significant – arguably even more so, as they can have a big impact on efficiency across all areas of a business.

## DESIGN AND EFFICIENCY

In order to maximize the productivity benefits of any investment in mailing technology, it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of existing mail processes within your business. Who sends mail, when, in what volumes and from where? Are there peaks and lows at certain times of the day? How do you cope with periods of peak demand? Do mail volumes fluctuate in line with invoicing schedules, marketing programs or seasonal demand? How much time is spent filling envelopes? How important is personalization/confidentiality? How much mail is received and how is it distributed? Do other employees help out to avoid bottlenecks and what effect does this have on their productivity?



Answering these and other questions will help identify areas where efficiency can be improved by changing a process or installing new equipment.

#### AUTOMATING MANUAL PROCESSES

Look out for manual processes (e.g. opening mail, stuffing envelopes or collating content) that can be automated to save time or free employees up for more productive tasks.

#### INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS

Consider whether separate tasks can be integrated so that mail flows from one stage to another in an uninterrupted process. Could you combine letter opening, content extraction and document scanning/distribution in a single production line or link folding inserting, envelope printing and using a meter? Most modern mailing equipment can be linked together to create integrated solutions that take up less space and are more productive than separate units.

#### APPLYING SOFTWARE

Software offers further scope for integration. Can you speed up the processing of incoming post by scanning letters and distributing them electronically? Or increase the impact of marketing campaigns by implementing output management software to personalize customer communications?

#### CENTRALIZATION

Is there an opportunity to improve productivity by centralizing mailing operations and output management, for example, by replacing several smaller and slower machines in multiple locations with a larger machine in a central position?

#### MAILROOM DESIGN

A separate consideration that also has a bearing on productivity is mailroom design. Mail processes are repetitive and have considerable scope for human error, so it is important to provide specialist furniture and space planning to ensure staff can operate effectively during peak periods. The positioning and design of tables, benches, sorting units and mailing equipment is critical for process efficiency and staff productivity. Installing the right furniture is not just a question of optimizing workflows. Modern, ergonomic fittings and seating can improve operator comfort and morale and have a beneficial effect on overall performance levels.

### MAIL PREPARATION

Mail preparation is a critical part of the mailing process. The number of stages involved – document design, printing, addressing, insertion and pre-sorting – means that it can be time-consuming and complex, especially for businesses that rely on manual processes. Failure to make the most of technology to automate mail preparation will not just impair productivity, but also competitiveness. In particular, it makes it impossible to deliver the levels of personalization demanded by customers, from customized mailings to a choice of communication channel. For businesses that do embrace mailing technology, today's solutions offer enormous scope to enhance the effectiveness of postal communications and the productivity of mailing processes.

#### ADDRESSING SOFTWARE

Ensuring that addresses in databases are accurate, complete and properly formatted helps eliminate the waste and expense of undeliverable or duplicated mailings and is essential in order to qualify for USPS® discounts. For businesses that print return addresses on envelopes, accurate addressing will cut the amount of time needed to deal with undeliverable returns.

#### FOLDER INSERTERS

These versatile machines automatically fold and insert documents into envelopes. Experience shows that an office worker can stuff approximately 100 envelopes per hour by hand, compared to 1,350 on an entry-level machine. As you move up the range and insertion tasks become more complex, the productivity benefits of automation are even greater: the most sophisticated models can insert up to 12,000 envelopes an hour and have multiple feed stations allowing a variety of documents, leaflets, reply paid envelopes, even booklets and CDs to be inserted. Associated software solutions let you personalize the types of insert sent to each customer.

## ENVELOPE PRINTERS

The ability to print envelopes on demand removes the need to manage, order, and hold pre-printed envelopes: just load blank envelopes and start printing – it's that easy. Dedicated high speed envelope printers that print addresses and marketing messages in color directly onto envelopes are a productive alternative to the use of labels and pre-printed envelopes in large mailings. Print speeds as fast as 39,000 envelopes per hour and an inaccurate addressing detection feature let you get more done, more accurately in a limited period.

## OUTGOING MAIL

Faster processing of outgoing mail has the potential to drive new business, enhance cash flow and improve customer satisfaction. The ability to process stacks of outgoing mail more quickly also helps create a cleaner working environment that could improve morale and efficiency.

## POSTAGE METERS

The ultimate labor-saving device for USPS customers, a postage meter is the most important investment you can make to improve mailing productivity. As well as giving access to USPS Commercial Base pricing discounts and E-Services, a meter reduces the time it takes to get mail out of the door and on its way to your customers.

Postage meters automate several key steps in a logical, linear sequence that is considerably faster and more accurate than disjointed manual processes, including weighing and sealing envelopes. With fully integrated USPS pricing, postage meters automatically calculate the right postage from the weight and size of the item and the postal service selected.

Higher-end models maximize throughput with conveyor belts and in-line weighing scales that create a single integrated workflow with the ability to process mixed batches on the fly. If necessary, postage meters can be linked to other equipment, such as folder-inserters, in a fully integrated mailing production line.

Modern machines feature all the time-saving features of digital technology including touch-screen displays; one-touch access to saved settings for regular jobs; network connectivity for remote management; and detailed accounting and usage reports. The latest “smart” machines also access online applications including rate change downloads and access to accounting software.

Clearly, the more mail a business sends out, the greater the



efficiency savings, but even businesses with low mail volumes can save time and effort with a postage meter. Having one removes the need to stand in line at the post office to buy stamps, as meters can be re-credited with postage online 24/7. Network connectivity also allows remote maintenance, online supplies ordering and automatic tariff updates as postal rate changes are introduced.

## MAIL ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE

Postal expenditure is another area that can be made more efficient through the use of technology. The ability to consolidate data from postage meters in multiple locations makes it quick and easy for managers to monitor usage across an entire organization. Using software monitoring and reporting instead of paper forms simplifies administration and management.

## INCOMING MAIL

Letter openers and scanners that create digital images of incoming mail have several benefits including allowing mail to be distributed to employees more quickly and helping organizations improve cash flow by processing sales orders and payments more quickly. It also enhances customer service by ensuring that staff quickly receives inquiries and complaints and boosts business efficiency by enabling general correspondence to be dealt with more quickly.

## LETTER OPENERS

An essential time-saver, letter openers can open mixed mail 60 times faster than by hand. The most productive machines can open 10 envelopes a second or up to 40,000 per hour without damaging the contents. Even small, portable models can open mixed mail at speeds of 300 envelopes per minute. Entry-level models cut the envelope on one side and an operator still must remove the contents. But mid- to high-end machines can cut an envelope on three sides and automatically extract any inserts. The addition of an optional conveyor belt that delivers letters to staff for sorting and electro-mechanical sensors that check an envelope is empty take automation to a higher level.

For maximum efficiency, letter openers can be integrated into a complete system with a conveyor belt that runs past one or more operators allowing them to date stamp letters and place them in sorting trays from a sitting position. Opening and delivery speeds are controlled by optical sensors triggered by sorting staff.

## TRACKING PACKAGES

Mail doesn't just enter a business through the mailroom; nor does it only arrive at regular delivery times. Packages are also delivered by courier - often to reception areas. Organizations that receive large numbers of such deliveries face a real challenge in keeping track of their whereabouts and arranging delivery to recipients who may be off-site. Software that tracks a package from the point at which it is received to delivery to the addressee removes much of the uncertainty and guesswork from this process. Once a package is dropped off, it is scanned and an email notification sent to the recipient.

## SPEAK WITH NEOPOST USA

To find out how Neopost USA can help you reduce mailing costs and improve your mailing productivity, visit [www.neopostusa.com](http://www.neopostusa.com) or call us at  
**1.800.NEOPOST (1.800.636.7678)**



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