

10 TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED WITH VIRTUAL MAIL

1 THE DEMAND IS REAL

For those of you with no experience with virtual mail, the demand can seem very mysterious. Trust that the demand for virtual mail is real. Davinci Virtual Office Solutions hosts (as in pays for) a big industry party for four days in Park City each year to thank their best customers. They pay out millions of dollars to the industry every year. You can sit at your desk and wonder "why?" or you can sign up and get in on that revenue. [Here's a good article outlining why people use virtual addresses.](#)

2 THE REVENUE IS REAL

Keith Warner from Pacific Workplaces shared very publicly at the 2019 GWA conference that in some of his locations, he pays the rent with his virtual mail revenue. Now, they've developed a very strong competency for marketing this service and they've built this up over years. But it's not rocket science, my friends. You, too, can be Keith Warner. What are you waiting for?

3 VIRTUAL MAIL CUSTOMERS ARE NOT CREEPY

One of the barriers to starting a mail service is that operators think virtual customers are somehow different from physical members and well, creepy. Virtual customers are people, too. They just don't need your physical space. Pro tip: keep your services priced at market rate or slightly higher and you'll get quality customers.

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4 YOU WILL NOT BE SWIMMING IN MAIL

If you get so much mail from your clients that you need to hire extra (part-time, minimum wage) staff to process it, this will be a very, very high-margin, first class problem to have. 80/20 rule: 80% of your clients will get very little mail, 20% will get regular mail, and your team will get very efficient at processing it each day.

5 YOU DO NOT NEED TO INSTALL PHYSICAL MAIL BOXES

Start simple. Most mail clients aren't going to come in to get their mail. They will rely on scanning/shredding/forwarding. You may wish to provide physical boxes for those that come in, but let's build up your mail business first. You can start with a simple, lockable filing cabinet. We use a stylish one that sits at the front desk from Poppin. You will also need some lockable storage space (IT closet anyone?) to store packages. You must be committed to keeping your mail secure. Easy peezy lemon squeezy.

6 THERE IS SOME PAPERWORK INVOLVED

For any "virtual" mail members that aren't physical members of your space, you'll need to verify their identity and fill out form 1583 for each client and file it in case of a UPS audit. You will need to have their 2 forms of ID verified by a notary. You can use an online service such as www.notarycam.com.

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7 SIGN UP WITH THE LEAD GENERATION PARTNERS

Do not build your virtual business on your own. Partner with the virtual mail lead generation services that will market your address to people looking for virtual addresses in your city. Do not rely on SEO and do not try to out-spend these folks on Google. Find the list of lead-gen partners on [page 21 of this Coworking Tech & Tools Guide](#).

8 ASSIGN EVERY MEMBER A UNIQUE ADDRESS

I recommend giving each mail client a unique address. This is not necessary from the post office's perspective but it's important if you allow physical members to use your address for a Google my Business Listing. Google does NOT like two businesses to operate under the same exact address. Use a "personal mail box" (PMB) as an extension of the suite number. For example: 2225 East Bayshore Road, Suite 100-202 with "202" being the PMB.

9 BATCH PROCESS THE MAIL

Assign the processing of the mail to 1-2 staff members that do it consistently and get really efficient at the process. Have them block out time in their schedule to process the mail each day around the time when the mail usually arrives. Batch processing will prevent your team from feeling like they deal with the mail "all day long."

10 BE PATIENT

Virtual Mail is not a silver bullet for saving your business. It takes time to grow. The best time to start a virtual mail program is when you first open. The second best time is today.

MAIL MANAGEMENT Q&A

HOW TO HANDLE MAIL DURING COVID-19 MANAGEMENT

Q My space is in a "shelter-in-place" zone. Am I allowed to open for mail customers?

Yes, in general, if you are a CMRA, you are supporting essential business operations and can go in to process your mail and allow members to pick up mail.

Q Should I place a hold on my mail and pick it up?

If you don't have a way to let your mail carrier into your space, or a locked external mailbox, then this approach might be your best bet.

Q How are spaces handling packages from UPS/Fed Ex?

These carriers are generally overwhelmed and leaving packages without signatures. Ideally you need a way for the carrier to leave the packages inside the building and ideally, inside your space. If they won't accept keycard/digital access, you may need to install a camera on your door so that you can monitor package delivery. Most importantly, tell members that they can't send packages to your space until further notice if you are closed.

Q Are you allowing customers to pick up mail?

If you are still staffed, then specify a window of time that mail clients can pick up mail. Consider offering free forwarding and digital scanning to avoid unnecessary in-person contact. Wear gloves when handling mail.

MAIL MANAGEMENT Q&A

HOW TO HANDLE MAIL DURING COVID-19 MANAGEMENT....CONTINUED

Q Should we offer free mail forwarding?

Many spaces are taking this approach for members that don't typically forward mail. It reduces the risk and is a value to the member.

Q How do we limit staff interaction with mail members?

Consider offering free digital scanning for all mail members. If this is typically a premium level of service for your mail offering, mention that to your members and tell them that you are upgrading them until further notice. They may love the service and choose to pay for it after the COVID-19 crisis. Anytime Mailbox, iPostal1 and Spheremail are platforms that offer digital mail scanning.

Q What if a mail member wants to pick up mail and I can't give them access to the mail storage?

If you don't have individual, locked mailboxes for mail clients, you'll need to get creative. Consider leaving the member's mail someplace "hidden" and telling them where it's located. Give the member temporary access to the space using your digital access (Brivo/Kisi/Salto).