



Case study: **BNP Paribas**

A mailroom redesign using upgraded technology improves BNP Paribas' incoming and outgoing postal operations.

BNP Paribas is a European leader in global banking and financial services serving three core markets - retail banking, corporate & investment banking, and investment solutions.

BNP Paribas has one of the largest international networks with operations in 80 countries and nearly 200,000 employees, including more than 150,000 in Europe.

BNP Paribas has had a long-standing working relationship with Pitney Bowes, going back approximately 12 years. Pitney Bowes now manages the company's mailroom operations on its London campus. The mailroom underwent major changes in May 2011, when it moved to a new site and the technology was upgraded.

Mailroom design

“BNP Paribas asked us to evaluate its mail operations to see where improvements could be made. It was clear that the current location of the mailroom, in the basement of the company’s main London campus building, was impractical”, explains Mike Webster, who oversees the BNP Paribas Operation.

“Under the existing set-up, if a suspicious package was identified, the entire building would need to be evacuated, including all of the company’s trading floors. This would result in massive financial loss for the business, as its operations would essentially be shut down until the risk was eliminated.”

To counter this problem, the team proposed moving the mailroom altogether, to a purpose-built space in another BNP Paribas building nearby.

“The building will still have to be evacuated if we receive a suspicious package but the people sharing the building now are departments such as human resources and other back office functions so the financial implications for the business would be drastically reduced”, says Mike.

The project gave the team the opportunity to completely redesign the mailroom. The new site is four times the size of the old location, so this opened up more possibilities for how the department could be laid out.

Melissa Cooper, Facilities Services Manager, BNP Paribas, oversaw the project. “I was keen to work with Pitney Bowes to use this opportunity. We considered the operational challenges we’ve traditionally faced in the mailroom and how a new layout could potentially overcome these.

“Through collaboration between my team and the mailroom staff, we analysed all of the stages that the mail passes through and from there discussed how the room should be organised for maximum efficiency and accuracy.”

The planning process took five months. During this period Pitney Bowes partnered with Envosort to design and produce the furniture for the new mailroom. 3D drawings were produced and bespoke models were tested to ensure that the furniture would meet the staff’s requirements.

“With their proven track record, Envosort were the ideal partner to design and manufacture the furniture for the BNP Paribas mailroom”, says Mike. “They are experts in their field and it was rewarding to combine our knowledge with theirs to create something bespoke for BNP Paribas.”

For example, it was essential for the team to keep incoming and outgoing mail separate to prevent cross-contamination, so a partition was installed to create a clear division between the two areas.

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“Within each of the two divisions there are clearly defined areas for each of the processes that create a flow around the room. So from where the incoming mail is delivered, it is passed through the scanning area and then into sortation where we sort according to the different floors of the building and then also into different departments. There is then a secure area where mail received by courier is logged and sorted. Then the sorting and franking of outgoing mail is segregated on the other side of the room partition.”

The result is that the mailroom looks better, feels better, and functions more effectively.

“The clear division means that there’s very little chance of the incoming and outgoing mail getting mixed together”, says Mike.



Outgoing mail

The redesign also gave BNP Paribas a good opportunity to upgrade their existing technology.

“The entire operation was being moved, and since a lot of the technology was quite old it made sense to install and update the infrastructure rather than move the existing machines”, explains Melissa.

Within the outgoing mail operation, BNP Paribas invested in a new Connect+ 3000 Communication Series franking machine. “The franking machine that the staff used previously worked fine, but it wasn’t a current model. So, we decided to switch to the new Connect+ machine”, says Mike.



The Connect+ is the first franking machine on the market capable of printing in full colour across the length of the envelope. The MyGraphics function allows the user to upload logos and images that can be incorporated into advertising messages and slogans.

The machine is also faster than BNP Paribas’ previous model. BNP Paribas send an average of 3,500 mail pieces every month, the capacity of the Connect+ 3000 is significantly higher – it can process up to 300 letters per minute – so the mailroom staff are assured that if there is particularly busy period the technology has the capacity to cope.

The mailroom staff did a fantastic job ensuring that the old mailroom closed on a Friday and the new site was ready on Monday morning. They worked over the weekend to make sure that everything was ready and that productivity could continue without a break. We had a fantastic Pitney Bowes project manager who handled all of the pricing, timetables, suppliers and deliveries and ensured that everything was delivered on time.” Melissa Cooper, Facilities Services Manager, BNP Paribas

Another benefit of the Connect+ is the account management function which gives BNP Paribas greater control over their mailing expenditure. Mail costs can be allocated to different accounts so that it is clear how much is being spent and on which services.

BNP Paribas now has three Connect+ machines, one in the main mailroom and the other two within different buildings on the London campus.

“The three machines are networked”, explains Mike. “So we can access each of the machines from the mailroom to check specific postage reports.”



Incoming mail

In the mail scanning area, the technology to process incoming mail has also been upgraded. A Todd Research TR70 has been installed to x-ray incoming mail for potentially harmful substances or concealed items. Images of the incoming mail sacks and parcels are viewed on two colour displays and anything suspicious is clearly visible.

The scanner is also connected to the internet, so that images can be sent away for further evaluation if required.

“We screen everything that comes in to ensure that we don’t deliver anything harmful. Thankfully we haven’t detected anything yet, but it is reassuring for BNP Paribas to know that we have up-to-date technology protecting the business”, says Mike.

In addition, BNP Paribas now use Pitney Bowes Arrival XE internal tracking and delivery management software. The software is used for incoming express packages and recorded delivery items, and keeps track of when each mail piece was received, who by, and any subsequent activity.

Incoming items are scanned using handheld portable data collectors (PDCs) and the data is downloaded to the Arrival system. BNP Paribas have integrated the software with their email system. An email is automatically generated upon receipt of an item, informing the recipient to collect in the case of a personal item or to expect delivery for a business item.

The system operates across BNP Paribas’ London campus, allowing the mailroom staff to view package status information for the other London buildings via the Arrival system.

“This system allows an overview of all the packages and recorded delivery items that we have received, and gives us real-time information as to what’s happened to them. It’s an efficient system which saves us time spent on keeping manual records.

“Also, once a member of staff has signed for a package the signature is stored, so if they think that they haven’t collected the item, we are able to trace the package activity”, explains Mike.

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The redesign of the mailroom and the technology upgrades have together made BNP Paribas’ postal operations more efficient and accurate, and the company is impressed with how the changes were thought out and handled.

“Everyone in the mailroom was consulted on the new layout, such as the messengers and drivers. Their feedback was integrated into the plans to ensure that we achieved the best possible outcome”, says Melissa.

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“We have also planned for the future with this room configuration”, adds Mike. “All of the technology can process greater capacities than it is currently used for and we’ve made the layout of the room flexible for future changes. For example, the idea of a mail hub, where BNP Paribas’ mail for all campuses and offices comes here before being distributed to the various sites, is being considered. Similarly, we might move to digital mail scanning in the future, whereby each mail piece is scanned and distributed digitally. We’ve planned for all those eventualities by ensuring that the workspace is flexible.”



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