Manage Incoming Mail

2.2.1.1 Introduction to the learning outcome

This unit covers competencies required to determine the frequency of collecting mail from the post office, identifying office messenger, identification of those responsible of office keys and authority card, facilitating of transport means, collecting of mail in mail bags and delivering of mail to the registry.

2.2.1.2 Performance Standard

2.2.1.2.1 Frequency of collecting mails from the postal office is determined as per the organizational requirements.

2.2.1.2.2 Office keys and authority card responsibility is identified as per organization policies

2.2.1.2.3 Office messengers is identified as per the SOPs.

2.2.1.2.4 Mail box keys are submitted to the messenger as per the SOPs

2.2.1.2.5 Transport means are facilitated as per the workplace policies

2.2.1.2.6 Mail is collected in mail bags as per the workplace polices

2.2.1.2.7 Mail is delivered to the registry/ office as per the SOPs

2.2.1.3 Information Sheet

Definitions of terms

Equipment: The necessary items for a particular purpose

Service: The action of helping or doing work for someone

Messenger: A person who carries a message or is employed to carry messages

Registry: A place or room where official records are kept.

Follow up: Pursue or investigate something further.

Remittance: Payment of money that is transferred to another party.

Frequency of collecting incoming mails from the postal office

Mail in most cases is collected by the messenger who gets the key to the Post Office Box from a senior official when he goes to collect them and should return to him once he has used it. There are fixed times for collection of mail usually in the mornings and once in the afternoon. For

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large organizations, they may collect their mails at regular intervals throughout the day for the purpose of distributing the workload evenly throughout the day among the personnel. This eases the work even during peak hours.

Submission of the mail box keys to the messenger

The Post Office has the responsibility of providing the messenger with their keys to be able to access their mailboxes. The Post Service will charge a non-refundable fee to replace a post office box. For the messenger to be trusted with the responsibility of handling the mail box keys, he/she should possess the following qualities:

(a) Patience

(b) Courtesy

(c) Sincerity

(d) Be specific

(e) Appearance – good grooming and a careful method of dress.

(f) Knowledge

Transport means are facilitated as per the workplace

The massagers may be provided with a means of transport to and from the Post Office. This would be beneficial to him because it saves his money on vehicle and fuel and also the mail will not get misplaced on the way thus improving their security. The mail will also reach the organization without delays, it is less expensive compared to the use of public means, the image or reputation of the messenger and the organization he/she works for is highly rated.

Collection of mail in mail bags

Mail bags is a type of bag used for collecting, carrying, categorizing and classifying different types of postal materials depending on its priority, destination and method of transport. . An authorized office messenger has the responsibility of undertaking the duty.

Benefits of Mail Bags

(a) They protect the mail

(b) They look professional

(c) They are attractive

(d) They are useful for fragile items (e) They are customers friendly.

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Delivery of the mail to the registry

Once the mail has been collected from the post office, it should be delivered to the registry. should be fixed timing for delivery of mail to the registry. The mail should be opened by at least two clerks in the presence of a supervisor. All letters should be opened except for those marked private, confidential or personal as they are opened by those to whom the letter is addressed. The clerks should confirm that the enclosures indicated in the mail are there and should be securely affixed to the letter concerned to eliminate the possibility of their getting misplaced. Re-check envelopes for contents before discarding to ensure that they are empty.

Finally record the mail in the mail inward register and forward to the respective departments.

Incoming mail

This section handles all the correspondence coming to an organization. Incoming correspondence will reach the office through the traditional mail, some by hand, by telex, fax or electronic mail. A well-designed procedure should be followed for proper handling of mails

Procedure of receiving incoming mail

· **Collection**

Most businesses received at least two mail deliveries from the post office on daily basis. For large organizations, they may collect their mails at regular intervals throughout the day for the purpose of distributing the workload evenly throughout the day among the personnel. This eases the work even during peak hours. Mails may be collected from the post office by any of the following personnel:

(a) Office Messenger

(b) The driver who may pass through the post office as he undertakes other office duties.

(c) The mail van that is usually assigned the work.

· **Sorting**

All letters should be sorted which should be guided by the following rules:

(a) Sort out mail into personal and non-personal mails. Personal mails are those addressed to a specific name while non personal are those mails addressed to the company.

(b) The personal mail should be sorted into respective departments where a respective individual work in. The letters should be ready for distribution at this stage.

(c) Non-personal letters should be sorted in the following order:

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(i) Remittances such as cash, cheques, postal and money orders.

(ii) Confidential letters

(iii) Materials or letters that require immediate attention

(iv) Routine mail

· **Recording inward mail**

In small departments, a book may be kept to record all incoming mail. This may not be the case

in other organizations but they record at least those letters with enclosures such as cash or cheques. It is important to record non-personal mail in the inward mail register and all remittances in the remittance inward book. It indicates the date of receipt, addressor, addressee, and to whom it is addressed.

Table 3: Inward Register Mail

DATE ADDRESER ADDRESSEE SUBJECT TO WHOM IT

IS ISSUED TO

· **Remittances inward book**

This is the book where the receipt of stamps, postal orders, money orders and cheques are usually recorded. It contains details such as: date, sender, method of payment (cheques) amount, cashier's signature, opener initials and total for the day.

Table4.Remittances Inward Book

DATE SENDER METHOD OF PAYMENT AMOUNT CASHIER'S

SIGNATURE

Daily Total

OPENER'S INITIALS…….

When handling remittances, the personnel handling them should ensure the following rules are observed:

(a) Documentary amount should be compared with the remittances received.

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(b) In case of any discrepancies, it should be reported immediately.

(c) The cashier should sign remittance inward book to confirm receipt of such payments.

(d) The cashier should sign for postage stamps after which they should be forwarded to the post department for use.

Removal of contents from an incoming mail

Once the non-personal mail is opened, the contents should be removed from the envelopes.

Contents include the letter itself and enclosures if any. The following rules should be observed in the removal of contents.

(a) Make sure the table is clean. This will help one not to mix the contents.

(b) Handle one letter at a time

(c) After removing the contents from the envelop pass it in front of light to make sure that no enclosure is not overlooked

(d) Use paper clips or staples to secure enclosures to their accompanying letters.

(e) If you notice that an envelope is missing, recheck the envelope and if one cannot find it, it on the letter.

(f) Sort the letters together with their enclosures into first bunch or second bunch.

Distributing of incoming mail.

At regular intervals, messengers are required to clear the sorting racks and trays and deliver the mails to various departments, sections and offices. For faster distribution, the following rules should be followed:

(a) Read and check the text of all recorded and date stamped letters in order to decide to whom it will be delivered.

(b) Send all the remittance to the cashier

(c) Route orders to the sales department

(d) Send application letters to the personnel department

(e) Send salary claims to the salaries and wages department

(f) Refer quotations and estimates to the purchasing department

(g) If the matter is to be dealt with by many officers, one can prepare a circulation slip.

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Follow up action

It is very important because it is concerned with keeping track of mail. At this stage, the mail clerk makes enquiry whether the letter is replied or not.

Mail room equipment and machines

- If several hundreds of letters have to be handled each morning and as many sent out each afternoon, the mailing department needs, above all, some long tables or counters which can be kept clear for this work

- Along the back of one or more of these tables there will be trays or pigeon-holes labeled with departments and individuals names to take the documents after they have been sorted and stamped

- Cupboards built beneath one of the workers could be used to house packing materials such as brown paper, string, gummed paper strips, self-sealing paper tape, sealing wax, corrugated cardboard, etc

- A shelf on the post office guide could be kept. It is an official handbook of the post

office and is published periodically. It gives full particulars of the principal services and charges together with street directories, maps, bus, rail, air timetables and any other reference books that prove useful

- Two smaller tables could be provided – one for the supervisor or chief clerk and one to house the franking machine, scales, stapling machines and other small equipment. If any petty cash is kept, it should be locked in a cash box kept in the supervisor's drawer

- A place must be reserved for the empty manila envelopes used for the internal mails if this system is used. Trays or pigeon holes are needed for branch communications where these existed.

- Table or floor space are necessary, must be provided for any letter-opening, folding or sealing machinery that may be used

- A few chairs will be needed for at the two smaller tables and some stools of an appropriate

  height to be used at the sorting tables

- Important small items such as the date stamp, paper knives, air mail stickers and other special labels should be kept together in an easily accessible place

- Wire trays and baskets – used to handle correspondence that has been sorted and each marked with departmental name

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Trolleys – used to take mail around the building to the people concerned. If there is a lot of mail for one person, place the mail in a folder with his name on it

- Pigeon holes – these are labeled alphabetically for various executives or departments. Mail is placed into the correct hole after sorting

- Desk sorter – for placing letters and documents related to one department onto one panel of the desk sorter

- Paper clips – is an instrument used to hold sheets of paper together, usually made of steel wire bent to a looped shape

- Punch – used to put holes in a document ready for filing

- Paper knife – for opening business envelopes

- Letter opening machine – used to open envelopes when the number of letters received is large, that is, 100 or more to save time

- Time and date stamping machine – used to time and date stamp all documents removed from the envelope

- Letter folding machine – used when a large number of letters or documents require folding so as to save time

- Letter inserting machines – used to insert folded letters into envelopes at a great speed

- Folding and inserting machine – for folding and inserting letters into envelopes at great speed

- Addressing machines – used to print names and addresses of regular customers or correspondence. The master is prepared in the form of stencils, spirit masters or metal plates. They are then passed through the machine for printing on envelopes

- Envelope or automatic sealing machines – used to seal envelopes when the quantities of envelopes are large

- Composite machine – this performs three functions, namely, folds the document, inserts them in envelops and seals the envelops

- Stamp emitting machine – rolls of postage stamps can be bought for use from these machines

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- Stamp fixing machine – when a envelope is placed under the machine a stamp is automatically moistened and affixed on the envelope

Stapling machine/stapler – this is used for affixing letters and enclosures or other pages together

- Sponge and roller moistener – stamp moistening device for wetting stamps or envelope to affix or seal
- Guillotine – for cutting and trimming papers to the required size
- Shredder machines – destroys secrets and confidential material if no longer required
- Jogger – vibrate papers together into alignment before fastening i.e. stapling or binding
- Collating machine – assembles duplicated documents comprising a number of pages such as s report before being fastened together
- Letter or parcel scales to weigh correspondence to ensure correct postage
- **Franking machines** – are used for large quantities of outgoing inland and/or overseas post. It quickly records the value of postage on envelopes or on adhesive labels for

parcels. The machine is usually reset at the post office on the payment of some money in advance and once the total postage paid for is exhausted the machine locks itself and has

to be reset again at the post office. Letters passed through the machine emerge stamped with the postage paid, a date, cancellation mark and also if desired, an advertisement.

The postage printed is changed by the setting of a lever to the correct figure and the meter on the machine records the value of the postage

Advantages of franking machines

- It saves time and labour because it can frank many letters within a very short time
- It facilitates greater security as opposed to lose stamps which can be stolen or lost. The machine can be locked to prevent unauthorized use
- Better control of expenditure/money as the machines shows at a glance the amount used and the balance at hand

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- Advertising slogans and the senders address can be printed with each and every franking and this saves printing costs/advertising costs

- Speedy dispatch of mail. Franked letters go to the sorting office for dispatch as they do not need to be cancelled, that is, date stamped

Firms with a franking machine do not need to maintain a postage book as the machines meter indicates the amount of postage paid

Disadvantages of franking machines

- Cost – money has to be spent on buying or hiring a machine. In addition, the post office requires users of machines to have them inspected and serviced regularly to ensure efficient operation. Repairs and servicing costs are forms of additional expenditure

- Inconvenience – franked envelopes cannot be posted in the same way as those wit postage stamps affixed. They must be arranged with all the names and addresses facing the same direction, securely tied into bundles and handed in at a specific post office. However, if the post office is shut, franked envelopes may be posted in a post box, but it is necessary to first put them in a special envelope

- Doesn't provide a record of the letters posted

- It is uneconomical for small firms with fewer than 20-30 letters daily to have this machine

- Operators may waste postage by franking wrong amounts or by not producing legible impressions

Security of incoming mail

Train employees on the importance of correspondence security. Employees should be trained to handle confidential correspondence with care and to respect the sensitivity. They should protect and share the information only to those who need to know. Place confidential correspondence in a folder so that they not visible to the onlookers.

The mail clerk officers should position their desk in such a way that visitors in the office will not be able to read confidential documents while they are being processed. The correspondence should be kept in lockable facilities and employees should be trained in locking away office correspondence and check that they are safe.

The organization should be careful to limit access to the incoming correspondence to only those employees authorized to handle the documents.

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The organization should ensure that if they have to be delivered, they should use a trusted courier service or have them delivered by someone trusted within the organization.

As an additional safe-guard, all mail collected by the messenger should be brought to the office a locked brief case which should be opened in the mail office.

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In case an organization wish to destroy an incoming correspondence, ensure that they are destroyed by shredding or use of incinerator.

Sources of incoming mail

Sources of incoming mail are the person from which the mail originates from or can be obtained.

The following can be considered as sources.

(a) Official communication from other organizations

(b) Prospective employees from other organizations

(c) Prospective customers

Responsibilities in handling incoming mail.

- Personal mail which includes any communication addressed to a specific name. This should directed to the specific individual to whom the letter is addressed and they should not be opened.

- Business mail includes letters, which are addressed to the company. These should be forwarded to the officers in charge of the departments to which the letter is referring to.

- Internal mail which includes mail within the organization, for example, memos, letters and other documents, e.g., circulars prepared within the organization. They are supposed to be dispatched to the various persons and departments or pinned on the notice boards

- Letters that require to be seen by more than one officer. A circulation slip should be prepared so that each of the concerned officers will have a look at it and act accordingly.

- For very urgent letter of immediate attention of several officers, photocopies should be made out of such letters and sent to all of them thereby saving time.

2.2.1.4 Learning Activities

Case Study

If you are responsible for operating a franking machine, state what action you should take for the following:

(a) Faint impressions of the printed information

(b) An envelope franked in error

(c) Preparing franked mail for dispatch

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(d) Closing the franking machine at the end of each day

Practical Activities

Design your own inward mail register and enter the following items, then file it in the file

(a) Letter from James Meme, P O Box 2009876 MERU, enquiring about non-delivery of goods.

(b) Contract received from Mary Jane Mwangi P O Box 34678 MOMBASE regarding the purchase of a plot of land for extensions.

(c) Invoice received from Stephen Ngondi P O Box 1435 KAMPALA

2.2.1.5 Self-Assessment

1. Mail Bags are often used in many organizations. What benefits would they offer to the users?

2. Companies all over the world do receive mail. Explain three origin of mail that are received in organizations?

3. Franking machine is being embraced by most organizations. What are the advantages of using it?

4. Explain the various postal services offered by the A Post Office to organizations.

5. For effectiveness in handling incoming mail, there should be fixing of responsibilities to those handling the mail. What should an organization do to achieve it?

6. Sorting is one step that is undertaken when handling incoming mail. What rules should be followed when sorting out incoming mail?

7. As a mail clerk working in the registry, you will be expected to use the following machines. Explain the uses of each:

(a) Letter opening machine

(b) Time and date stamping machine

(c) Letter folding machine

(d) Letter inserting machines

(e) Addressing machines

(f) Envelope or automatic sealing machines

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8. What rules should govern the personnel handling remittances that accompany incoming mail?

2.2.1.6 Tools, Equipment, Supplies and Materials

- Computers
- Mailroom table
- Sorting trays
- Date/time stamp
- Addressing machine
- Franking machine
- Office glue
- Pin remover
- Stapler
- Paper punch
- Opening knife
- Internet connectivity
- Registers
- Stationery
- Signage
- Organization chart
- Reference materials
- Office memory aids
- Mailroom equipment

2.2.1.7 References

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