

Streamline your workflow:

A Comprehensive Guide to Mail Automation



quadi⁷ent

INTRODUCTION

In today's on-demand, real-time, get-it-when-you-want-it world, sending your customers **the right mail in a timely manner** is more important than ever. Invoices, statements, and other communications not only relay important information but also drive revenue and cash flow for your business. However, mail that is processed manually leads to slower delivery times and quality issues. To help with this, many businesses choose to invest in a folder inserter to prep mail faster and more accurately.

Let's face it, while customer communications are an essential part of doing business, processing mail is tedious and time-consuming. A manual process causes errors in mail prep, low employee engagement, and lost time that could be spent on higher-value tasks. Preparing mail by hand is actually risky business.

DID YOU KNOW...76% OF ALL CONSUMER BILLS ARE SENT PHYSICALLY.

Folder inserters can help businesses reduce those risks!

While a folder inserter can benefit your business in many ways, with different sizes, capabilities, and features available, it can be difficult to decide which solution best fits your business.

Considering a folder inserter is an important first step toward transforming and modernising your mailing process. That's why we created **A Comprehensive Guide to Mail Automation** to provide the facts, figures, and available features to help you make an informed choice. In this guide we uncover **the benefits of automating your mailing process so you can take your customer communications to the next level.**

TOPICS INCLUDE:

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WHAT IS A FOLDER INSERTER?

A folder inserter is a machine that speeds up mailing processes by automating the mundane task of folding, stuffing, and sealing envelopes by hand. Even entry-level models can help get mail prep done 10X faster. Folder inserters range from smaller models that fit on a desktop to larger configurations suited for high-volume mailers. Some machines can be enhanced with document automation software to further streamline and secure your mailing process.



TOP FIVE REASONS COMPANIES USE FOLDER INSERTERS

Looking to invest in a folder inserter? These five benefits stand out above the rest:

1 PROCESS MORE MAIL IN LESS TIME

Aside from stuffing envelopes, sorting, grouping, and collating documents for the right recipients (especially if the contents vary by customer) is extremely time-consuming. Depending on your particular mailings and volume, folder inserters may cut processing time by 75% or more.

2 INCREASE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

Preparing mailings manually often requires multiple employees to perform this labour-intensive activity. Using a folder inserter, one person can do the job of many in a fraction of the time. This reduces labour costs and enables you to reallocate employees to other revenue-driving projects.

Quantifying Time and Labour Savings			
Average productivity levels for folding and inserting by hand:			
# of sheets per envelope	One	Two	Three
# of filled envelopes per hour	120	95	85
When also adding an insert	105	80	70

3 DECREASE CASH FLOW CYCLE AND OTHER BUSINESS-CRITICAL TIMELINES

Efficient processing of transactional mail, such as statements and invoices, helps improve cash flow. The faster bills enter the mail stream, the quicker you receive payment. With a folder inserter, you can send communications quickly, resulting in shorter Days Sales Outstanding (DSO).

4 ENSURE ACCURACY AND MITIGATE THE RISK OF HUMAN ERROR

Manual folding and stuffing is not a secure process, and error rates are often higher than you think! Folder inserters, when paired with document automation software, not only process mailings faster but also ensure that the right mailings go into the right envelope.

5 PRODUCE MORE PROFESSIONAL-LOOKING MAIL

Mail pieces assembled by a folder inserter contain crisply and precisely folded documents that reflect positively on your business's professional image.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND COSTS OF MANUAL MAIL PREP?

It sounds simple, but the most important thing about effective, impactful customer communications is that the right content goes to the right recipient. But when employees are manually processing hundreds of letters, making sure the right communications get into the right envelope is not as easy as it sounds. More sheets, inserts, and variable documents mean more opportunities for documents to be omitted, misplaced, or sent to the wrong person. Mailings sent to the wrong individual or containing the wrong contents not only reflect poorly on your organisation, for those in industries who manage highly sensitive information, it can result in customer dissatisfaction, damage to your company's reputation, or even compliance violations such as GDPR, DPA 2018 and other industry standards, not to mention delays in cash collection.

Did you know that 39% of all invoices sent are paid late and 61% of late payments are due to mistakes and errors?

Mail is still a critical part of the customer communication mix, but preparing mail without automation doesn't have to be. Have you ever spot-checked a mail run by pulling a random envelope from the pile to make sure everything was done correctly? If so, what happens if an error occurs before or after? Once the envelopes have been stuffed, your business is wasting additional time and money on spot checking. Double-checking wastes twice as much time just confirming if the task was done correctly OR NOT.

In 2020, we commissioned a study held at the University of New Haven in Connecticut where participants were required to perform complex manual mailing tasks for 1.5 days. Each participant had to sort and group various documents for 200 recipients as well as pull exception documents like zero-balance statements. The university conducting the study made the following observation:

“ SIXTY PERCENT OF PARTICIPANTS SHOWED MORE INTEREST IN FINISHING THE TASK THAN ENSURING WHAT THEY PROCESSED WAS DONE CORRECTLY, DESPITE NOT HAVING AN IMPOSED TIME LIMIT TO FINISH THEIR WORK. — Dr. Robert Albright, AIM Consulting ”

Once the participants finished their task, the university found that not all mail pieces were completed properly. The study further found that over time these workers experience lower motivation and engagement than employees assigned to more thought-provoking and mentally stimulating work. Imagine the impact on an employee performing this tedious, unrewarding work, day in and day out?

FULL VERSUS PARTIAL AUTOMATION

Another key finding in the mail study was the value of full versus partial automation. Partial automation was defined as using a folder inserter without the safety net of document automation software. While using the inserter significantly decreased processing time, if one document was not inserted properly it had a compounding effect on subsequent documents, thereby **tripling the error rate in some cases**. The study concluded that **combining hardware and software is the best solution** to increase efficiency and ensure accuracy.

WHAT'S INSIDE THE ENVELOPE?

What important information is your business sending, and who cares the most about it at your company?

Inside every envelope is an important invoice, statement, message, or business communication. If you're in accounts receivables, then how quickly mail is prepared affects your ability to collect. Marketers need their inserts to affect future sales and revenue targets. One of the key benefits of pairing mail preparation hardware, like a folder inserter, with automation software is peace of mind. Companies must communicate messages that add value and ensure security and integrity at each touchpoint. Every customer communication your company sends out is critical, and each message is important.



Are you able to ensure that the contents of each business-critical communication is being processed correctly with your current mail preparation process?

WHY INVEST IN A FOLDER INSERTER?

SAVE MONEY ON EVERY MAILING

A folder inserter saves hundreds of pounds in labour costs each month, depending on your mail volume. When you enhance your folder inserter with automation software, you can group documents intended for the same customer, which also saves on postal costs.

SAVE HOURS EVERY WEEK

Time is a commodity for every business. Even a small business can save up to 8 hours a week by processing mail with a folder inserter. Employees can carry greater workloads and extra responsibilities without being weighed down with the time-intensive task of mailings.

Hand vs. machine processing

Monthly Volume	Manual Hours ¹	Manual Labour ²	Machine Hours ³	Machine Labour £	Monthly £ Saved	Monthly Hours Saved
1,000	8	£125	.5	£7.50	£117.50	7.5
2,500	21	£312.50	1.3	£18.80	£293.70	19.7
5,000	42	£625	2.5	£37.50	£587.50	39.5
10,000	83	£1,250	5	£75	£1,175	78
15,000	125	£1,875	7.5	£112.50	£1,762.50	117.5

¹Based on 120 per hour. ²Based on £15.00 per hour. ³Based on 2,000 per hour



STUFF AND SEAL THOUSANDS OF ENVELOPES AN HOUR

Assemble mail invoices, statements, and marketing materials in record time. Larger folder inserters have multiple paper feeders and envelope stackers that enable you to program a job and spend time on other tasks while the mailing is being done for you.

GET PAID FASTER

The faster you generate and send invoices, the quicker you receive payment, which reduces your DSO and working capital.

AVOID FINES AND NONCOMPLIANCE

Ensure documents are always sent to the correct recipient by pairing your inserter with intelligent software.

CALCULATING YOUR RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Use the formula below to quickly calculate and get a general idea of how much time and money you will save for your business:

Cost of manual process

# of filled envelopes per month	÷	# of filled envelopes per hour by hand	=	# of hours per month to complete	×	hourly wage	=	Current monthly cost
15,000		350		43		£25.00		£1,071.43

Cost of automated process

# of filled envelopes per month	÷	# of filled envelopes per hour by machine	=	# of hours per month to complete	×	hourly wage	=	New monthly cost
15,000		2,200		6.8		£25.00		£170.45

Bottom line cost savings

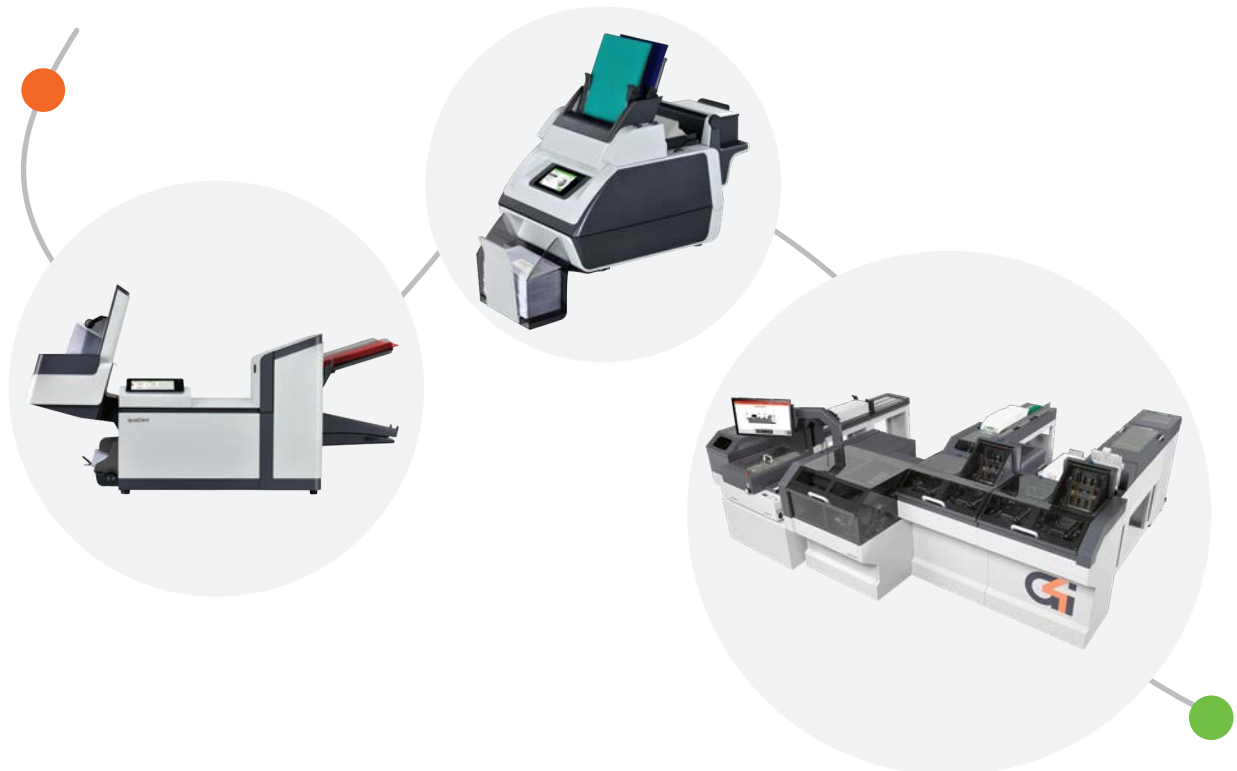
cost per month manual process	-	labour cost per month with automation	-	equipment lease payment	=	Monthly savings
£1,071.43		£170.45		£285.00		£615.97

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT FOLDER INSERTER?

Now that you understand the benefits of using a folder inserter, it's time to identify which machine and what features will best suit your business. Folder inserters come in all shapes and sizes, from compact models that fit on a desktop to those that require more room to spread out. Start by answering the questions below, then see which category (low, mid or high-volume) is best for your business.



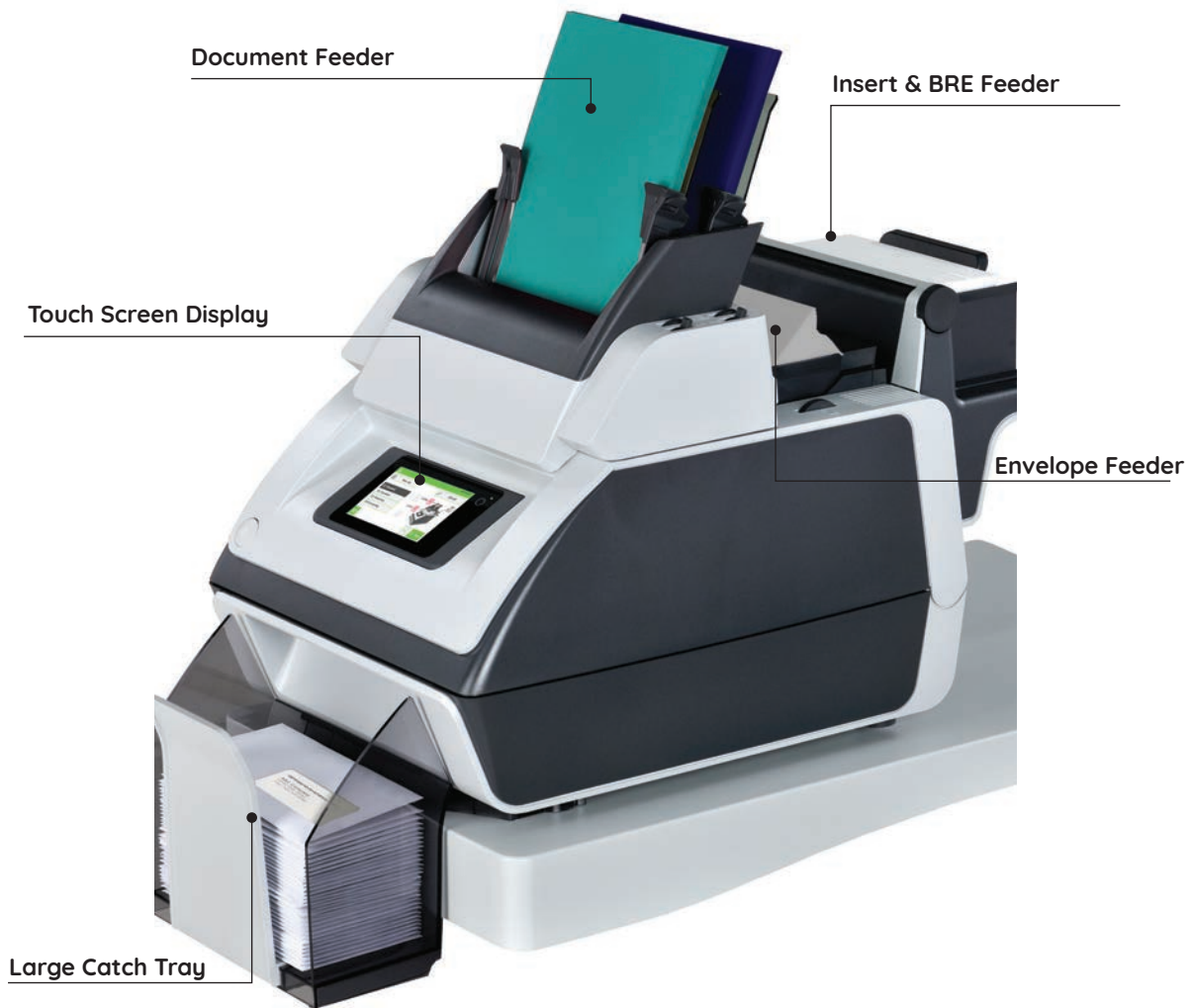
1. How many envelopes, on average, do you send out each month?
2. How often do you expedite business-critical mailings?
3. What type of mail do you send?
4. What size envelopes do you use?
5. Do your envelope sizes vary?
6. Are you in a highly regulated industry with compliance requirements and regulatory mandates?
7. How much space do you have for the folder inserter equipment?



LOW-VOLUME FOLDER INSERTERS

REDUCE MAIL ASSEMBLY TIME FROM HOURS TO MINUTES

Low-volume folder inserters have a small footprint while offering big benefits. These little powerhouses accept a wide variety of documents, such as invoices, statements, inserts and envelopes and can fold over 1,000 mail pieces per hour. They are ideal for small or home offices and complement offices already equipped with larger folder inserter models to handle smaller jobs.



Low-volume folder inserters	Processing output (Fold, insert and seal envelopes)	Automation software compatibility	Ability to add on feeders as business grows
Tier 1	Up to 1,350 per hour 10,000 per month	No	No

MID-VOLUME FOLDER INSERTERS

MAJOR PRODUCTIVITY WITH A SMALLER FOOTPRINT

Mid-volume inserters are the in-office workhorse that fits on a tabletop allowing you to process important business communications quickly and securely and with the utmost integrity. They are ideally suited for businesses that need to automate a wide variety of document sizes and types.

Colour touch screen display

The 7-inch display enables easy navigation. Holds up to 50 pre-programmable jobs for quick job access

CIS scanner

Internal Contact Image Sensor (CIS) scanner reads OMR, 1D and 2D codes printed on the document. Stores up to 25 reading code definitions

Automated stacker

The high-capacity vertical stacker holds up to 500 finished envelopes

Envelope side guides

Provide extra support so envelopes stay in place during production to reduce risk of jams

Vertical track staging

Accelerates processing speed and multi-sheet applications when using first of group reading

Document feeders with paper presence sensors

Process multiple page sets at high processing speeds using three standard feeders. While in cascade mode, feeder sensors ensure continuous operation

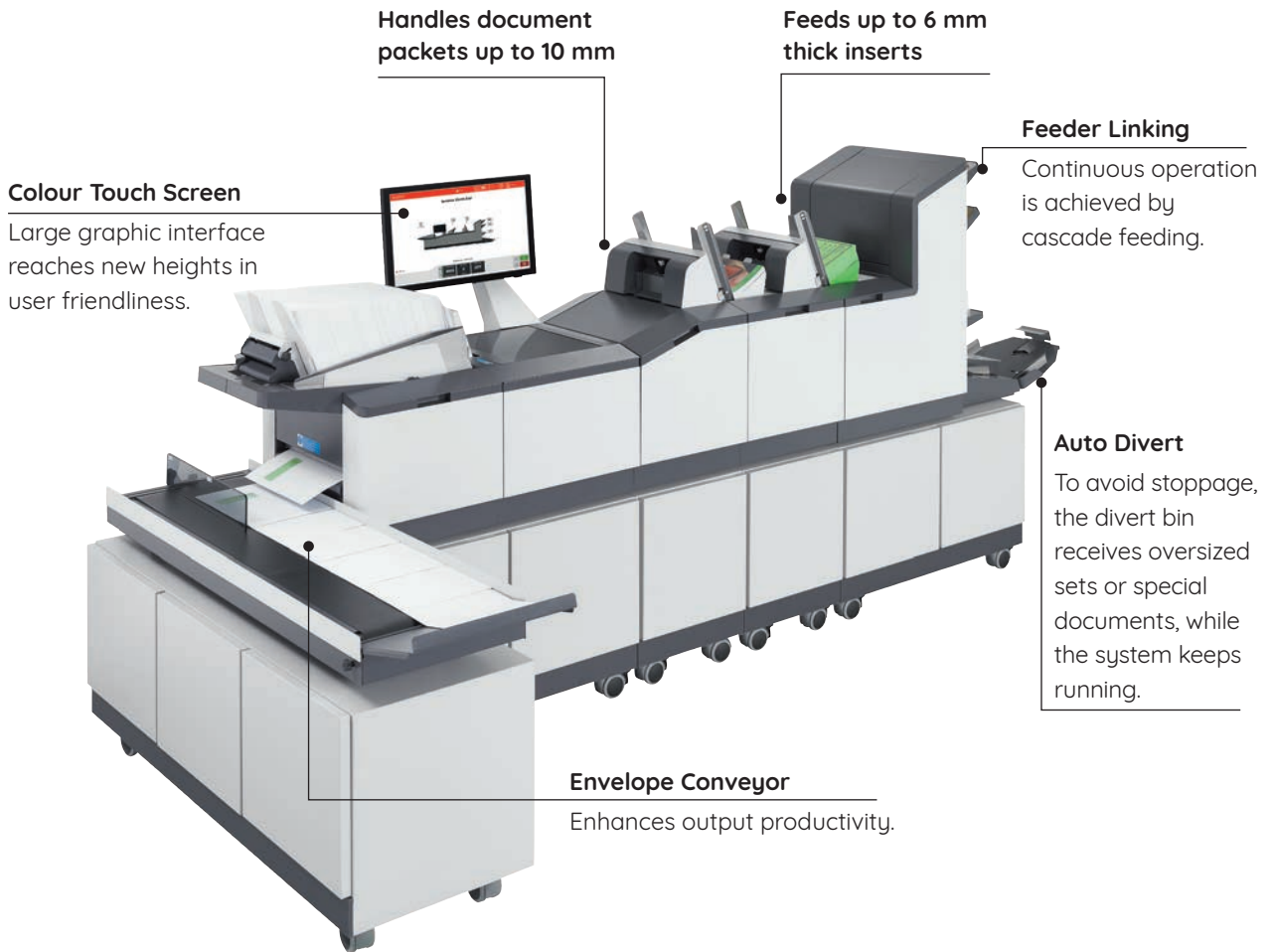


Mid-volume folder inserters	Processing output (Fold, insert and seal envelopes)	Automation software compatibility	Ability to add on feeders as business grows
Tier 1	2,500 per hour 20,000 per month	Yes	No
Tier 2	3,800 per hour 40,000 per month	Yes	No
Tier 3	4,000 per hour 60,000 per month	Yes	No
Tier 4	4,300 per hour 80,000 per month	Yes	No

HIGH-VOLUME FOLDER INSERTERS FOR PRODUCTION MAIL

DESIGNED FOR HEAVY-DUTY USAGE AND MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY

These folder inserters support a wide range of applications to maximise productivity every step of the way, from efficient paper loading to predictive intelligence that estimates job completion time. They provide a variety of job options and easily manage multiple short and large runs. Most machines can be configured and scaled with the appropriate modules as your company grows.



High-volume inserters for production mail	Processing output (Fold, insert and seal envelopes)	Automation software compatibility	Ability to add on feeders as business grows
Tier 1	4,500 per hour 180,000 per month	Yes	No
Tier 2	7,000 per hour 300,000 per month	Yes	Yes
Tier 3	12,000 per hour 800,000 per month	Yes	Yes

WHAT FEATURES SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN A FOLDER INSERTER?

Let's get into the key features in more detail. Here's a checklist for what might suit your business needs.

EASE OF USE

Many of today's folder inserters come with intuitive touchscreens that are easy to understand and make operation a breeze for almost anyone in the office. Yes, anyone! Wizard-based operating software guides users through the easy set-up. Once a job is programmed into its memory, running it is as simple as loading the trays. Operators only need to select the job and press start.

JOB VERSATILITY

Folder inserters handle a wide variety of document sizes, types, and folds, and all common types of envelopes. The versatile feeders handle documents ranging from heavier stock sheets to booklets and can be reloaded on the fly to minimize downtime.

MODULARITY

Those with a modular design enable you to add feed stations to ensure you always have the capacity to meet the requirements of your business. Some models have up to 18 configurations.

INTELLIGENT VERTICAL STACKER

These stack trays accumulate envelopes vertically to maximise space. Vertical stacking provides easy access to help you unload filled envelopes.

REMOTE SUPPORT AND DIAGNOSTICS

Folder inserters equipped with remote access connect to your network and provide you with unique online services to help reduce downtime and minimise assembly times.



INTELLIGENT MAILING OPERATING SYSTEM SOFTWARE

The primary function of this software is to automate barcode creation on documents prior to printing so that variable-page jobs can be processed automatically and securely using a folder inserter. The software adds an intelligent barcode to each document to group, sort, or collate materials based on your pre-defined business rules.

CONTACT IMAGE SENSOR (CIS)

This feature conveys mail piece assembly instructions to the folder inserter. In simple terms, the barcodes tell the folder inserter which documents and inserts belong together in the same envelope. Documents intended for the same customer may be combined into one envelope to enhance customer experience and reduce total postage spend. It allows variable page/variable-insert jobs to be collated with virtually perfect integrity, such as:

Customer A's statement is 2 pages in length and requires a coupon insert.
Customer B's statement is 4 pages with no insert needed, and so on.

FULL-PAGE BARCODE READING

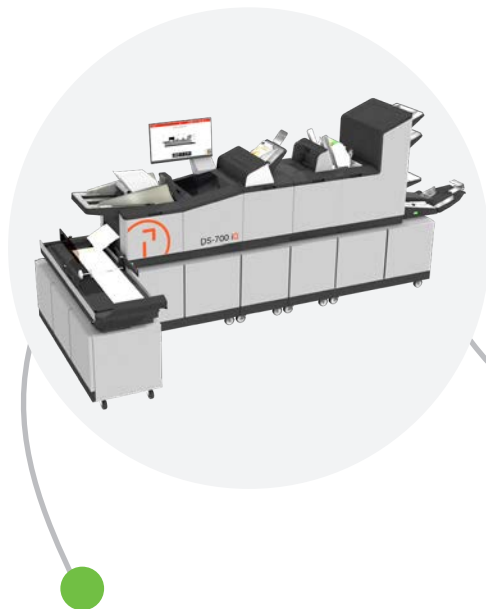
CIS scanners read a wide range of barcodes printed on your documents, including optical marks, optical characters, and 1D/2D data matrix barcodes, allowing you to process variable page documents efficiently and securely. Some CIS scanners can read the entire page. Because of this capability, barcodes can be printed anywhere on the document – horizontally or vertically. This eliminates the need for manual adjustments in case of different barcode positions which translates to a faster setup and production time



CLOSED-LOOP VERIFICATION

Closed loop verification is an increasingly critical capability for businesses in highly regulated industries that are subject to privacy regulations like GDPR. Insertion management software records, monitors and reports on the entire folding and inserting process from start to finish. Each feeder calibrates the first document fed and checks each subsequent document to ensure there are no double feeds or misfeeds. Insertion management software offers:

- Real-time access to operational data such as the number of mail pieces processed/unprocessed and time elapsed for all active jobs
- Job data that proves 100% of the documents in a print job were inserted into the correct envelopes
- Comprehensive reports to prove compliance along with performance metrics and reports across job types, operators, and systems over time



AUTOMATIC JOB CHANGEOVER

Some high-volume folder inserters require a skilled operator to change parts on the machine in order to prepare it to process a different job type. Folder inserters with automatic job changeover capability eliminate unproductive downtimes as folding, pack size, and envelope adjustments are made automatically whenever a job is chosen. **This reduces downtime on average from 30 minutes to 30 seconds.**



HOW DO I CHOOSE THE RIGHT MAILING PARTNER?

Whenever you purchase equipment for your business, you want to be confident that you are making a thoughtful decision. Shopping around and comparing vendors will help you find the company that is right for you. Below is a list of key questions to ask a mail expert when shopping for a folder inserter:

Vendor Question Cheat Sheet	NOTES
1. What machines are available for my mail volume and how fast are they?	
2. How easy is it to use and is there any training available?	
3. What optional features should I add to the machine that makes sense for my business?	
4. What is the reliability and downtime of the machine?	
5. What is your estimate of the total monthly cost for a folder inserter?	
6. Are there leasing options vs. buying outright? (Leasing typically gives you access to upgrades as part of your contract vs. buying a machine outright).	
7. Can we test our mail on your equipment?	
8. What support can I get if something goes wrong in the middle of a job?	
9. Could you provide a copy of your terms and conditions?	
10. Can you spell out all fees involved in the proposed contract?	
11. What is the total cost of ownership?	
12. Can I see this machine action before buying such as a live stream demo?	



SPEAK WITH A QUADIENT MAILING EXPERT

Quadient's superior folder inserters and document handling solutions bring accuracy, efficiency, and reliability together in an easy-to-use solution that makes your mail assembly simple and fast. Designed for businesses of every size, Quadient offers a range of intuitive solutions that provides the highest level of productivity and dependability.

Pair a folding and inserting machine with Quadient's intelligent software and you will have a powerhouse mailroom solution. When you automate mail creation with an intelligent Quadient folder inserter, you lower costs, eliminate user error, and ensure the right documents are always sent to the right customer.

Thousands of companies trust Quadient to enhance the mail preparation process and ensure communication security. Quadient's easy-to-use mailing software and hardware helps companies of all sizes simplify, automate, and modernise document preparation, reduce compliance risk, and better the mail outreach process.

Connect with a Quadient solution expert to learn more, request a quote or see a live demo of the folder inserter in action. Learn more at mail.quadient.com/eb-gb.

SOURCES:

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2. <https://sharespace.digital/blog/scary-invoicing-stats-you-shouldnt-ignore>
3. How Automation Impacts Document Workflow - a Pilot Study, 2020



About Quadient®

Quadient is the driving force behind the world's most meaningful customer experiences. By focusing on Intelligent Communication Automation, Parcel Locker Solutions and Mail-Related Solutions, Quadient helps hundreds of thousands of customers worldwide simplify the connection between people and what matters.

For more information about our mail-related solutions, visit mail.quadient.com.

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