

Understanding Flats Co-Mailing

The Benefits, Requirements
And Added Values of Utilizing
Co-Mailing for Your Standard
and Periodical Pieces

What Is Co-Mailing?

Co-mailing is the merging of multiple different Flat size titles to create one much larger mail-stream, with all the titles sorted and bundled into the most USPS delivery-friendly sequence possible.

The primary results of this process are postage savings via the increase in the level of carrier route and automation sort mail in the overall run and additional drop ship entry discounts to the NDC, SCF and ADC levels of the USPS.

Put simply, co-mailing creates postage savings through additional economies of scale and improved presorts via pooled runs for multiple catalogers and publishers that could not normally be reached on their own.

What Is The Difference In Co-mailing and Co-palletizing?

Co-Mail addresses and combines individual pieces of mail into new, better presorted bundles which provides a large impact on postage and drop ship-eligible pallets. A CAPS debit account and a permit from the co-mail site postal facility are required by the USPS. Co-mail pools normally operate on multiple days of the week and at varying quantities.

Co-Palletization groups physical bundles or trays of mail, which have already been addressed and presorted onto pallets in order to reduce bag mail and create more pallets. These pallets then can be destination drop shipped to a corresponding postal facility and receive a destination entry discount.

Who Benefits The Most From Co-mailing:

Printers, publishers, and catalogers with title runs of 10,000 to 500,000 pieces.

Periodical mailers with subscription lists that do not generate significant levels of carrier route mail (under 50%) or firm bundles.

Catalog mailers with solicitation (address) lists that do not generate significant levels of carrier route mail (under 50%).

How Are Savings Generated In Co-Mail?

Most mail that fits within a co-mail environment would normally be entered locally by the producer (origin entry mail) and receive no drop ship or other postage discount such as carrier route or automation, or jobs that would receive limited net postage savings from destination entry drop shipping.

Essentially, savings are created in a co-mail environment by refining the mail's delivery sortation down to the carrier route and 5-digit level and thereby reducing labor and handling costs within the USPS operations, for which they offer discounted postage pricing.

Co-mailing creates more firm bundles with higher piece counts (min of 6 and max of 10 pieces per bundle) and these "pre-sorted bundles" can bypass many processing and distribution levels within the USPS system. In the case of periodical mail, you receive an added postage discount for higher piece count firm bundles as well as the improved carrier route and drop ship discounts. Co-mail also allows the co-mailer to produce more 5-digit pallets which adds support to the USPS Flat Sequence System (FSS).

Example of Co-mail Savings

Mail Quantity: 80,878

Origin Non-Drop Ship Postage:

Regular:	5 Digit	174
	3 Digit	578
	ADC	9
	Mxd ADC	1

Automation:	5 Digit	27,208
	3 Digit	52,157
	ADC	198
	Mxd ADC	121

Carrier Route	Basic	432
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Non Co-mail Drop Ship Postage:	\$21,301.67
Co-Mail Drop Ship Postage:	\$13,927.64
Postage Savings via Co-mail:	\$7,374.03
Co-mail fees:	\$1,278.10
Co-mail destination entry freight:	\$800.69
Savings from Co-mail:	\$5,295.24

How Does The Co-mail Process Work?

A co-mail supplier will create weekly pool runs of periodical, standard and in the case of ALG, mixed class (combinations of periodical and standard mail in the same pool) mail.

Participants in the co-mail pool electronically provide their name / address lists in a preset format to the co-mailer by a pre-determined time prior to the pool start date (in the case of ALG this is 3 business days).

The co-mail provider will then run a merged presort incorporating all of the individual address lists provided for the specific pool run. From this merged presort each individual title / customer is provided a postage estimate based on the new merged presort.

Meanwhile, the periodicals or catalogs are being printed without any address information present on their covers. The "blank" books are then shipped to the co-mailer by a predetermined time prior to the scheduled pool run start (in the case of ALG this is two business days prior).

The pallets of books are staged and loaded into the pockets on the co mail lines in a predetermined order to allow the titles with the most common delivery schemes to run together on each pass (similar to a selective bind process in printing).

The new combined USPS entry pallets are created, the mail is verified by the USPS clerk on-site and a CAPS account is tapped for postage payment and freight release for delivery to the USPS entry points.



Primary Requirements For Participating in Co-mail

There are generally limitations on the size of the pieces that can run in a co mail pool as the dimensions of all the books need to be within a certain tolerance of each other.

Each Pool will have a set schedule of In Home Dates for that pool.

Each participants address label requirements must fall within the specifications of the co-mailers ink jet heads and placement.

Jobs for co-mail should not have heavy regional or local concentrations, saturation or high levels of carrier route mail.

All co-mail pieces must be under 16 oz for Standard mail and 20 oz for Periodical mail (there is an allowance for up to 22 oz on some PER pieces). 1 lb pieces of non Periodical mail and heavier become bound printed matter and are not eligible for most co-mail environments.

Mailing permits must be opened at the USPS site servicing the co-mailer, and the permit needs to be linked to a debit CAPS account for postage payment.

Jobs That Do Not Traditionally Fit Co-mail

Digest and Tabloid (12" and greater head to foot) pieces as these types of jobs are not generally run in large scale co mailing operations and cannot be run and bundled for mailing with more standard 8 ½ X 10 ¾ pieces.

Very thin pieces – ALG has a limited number of thin pocket feeders on its lines and has handled down to a 12 pp on 80 to 100 # coated stock. Conversely, most co mail suppliers do not run books that are over ½" thick on the spine.

Books with odd binding configurations such as loop bound, etc. as an even spine is needed for feeding from the pockets.

Books that do not pass the current USPS deflection ("droop") test.

Jobs with high levels of CR mail or regional saturation.

Misc. Info

Poly-bagged pieces – not all co-mailers can run poly-bagged books. In the case of ALG we do run poly and will either apply a label and then ink jet the address onto the label, or request the producer provide a white knock-out or “milk strip” on the poly to allow for ink jetting.

Coated stocks – not all co mailers can ink jet onto all cover stocks. ALG can handle aqueous, UV and other coated stocks within our co mail environment.

Postage savings in a given co-mail pool will vary based on the participants, job piece counts, levels of carrier route mail, etc.

Co-mail does not currently accommodate inside / outside addressing.

Optimal Data Management – ALG can do splits on address files for large count runs (over 300,000) to extract only the non-carrier route mail to run for co-mail, leaving the CR mail to be planned as drop shipped mail.

ALG can handle both Basic and Full Service IMB Bar codes within co-mail.

Both regular and non-profit mail can be run in a co-mail environment



Final Co-Mail vs. Non Co-Mail Comparisons

Non Co-Mail Jobs

- Minimal or no drop ship savings
- Minimal or no Carrier Route mail
- Large volume of mail in sacks (PER)
- Uneven/unpredictable mail delivery
- Minimal or no Postage Discounts
- Potential damage to product via handling

Co-Mailed Jobs

- Improved destination entry discounts
- Increased percentage of Carrier Route
- More palletized mail vs. sacked mail
- Faster more predictable mail delivery
- Increased Postage Discounts
- Reduced damage due to reduced handling