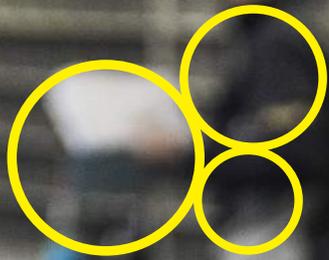


ASENDIA

BY LA POSTE & SWISS POST



THE POWER OF THE PHYSICAL LETTER



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Introduction

In an era when more and more commercial transactions are conducted online, it is easy to assume that electronic media must have eclipsed the physical letter as the preferred form of correspondence for most companies. Yet when it comes to sending and receiving international business post, paper-based documentation still retains

more credibility and generates more trust than internet-based methods of communication, as a new study commissioned by Swiss Post proves. Conducted in late 2015, the online survey questioned a group of more than 700 Germany-based private and business clients about their preferences for receiving correspondence from the foreign

companies with which they have relationships. The enduring power of the letter comes across in almost every aspect of the research, with the majority of respondents consistently saying that they value its tangible nature, which makes it harder to overlook than newer forms of communication and gives it a personal appeal that is difficult to match.



“Paper-based business post still **retains** more **credibility** and generates more **trust** than **online**”

Paper vs online

Physical perceptions

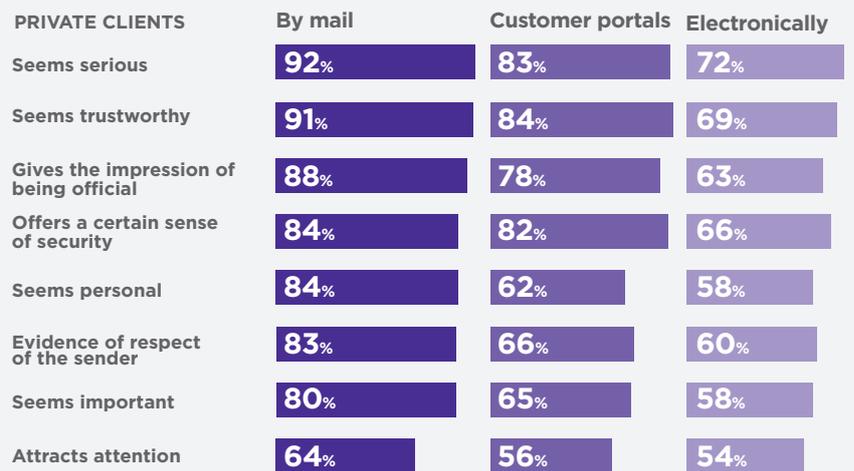
The figures speak for themselves: 93% of the business clients surveyed perceive paper-based international correspondence as both serious and official, and more than 90% of private clients consider it to be trustworthy and serious. By comparison, just 63% of businesses surveyed describe email as trustworthy, while more than a third of private clients do not think it gives the impression of being official. Online portals for sharing information may be useful for their speed and efficiency, but they still take second place to physical post in categories such as seriousness and trustworthiness. Letters, on the other hand, rank highly among both commercial and private clients for criteria including their ability to command respect for the sender (cited by 83% of private clients and 85% of businesses) and their comparatively personal nature (a benefit for more than 80% of all respondents).



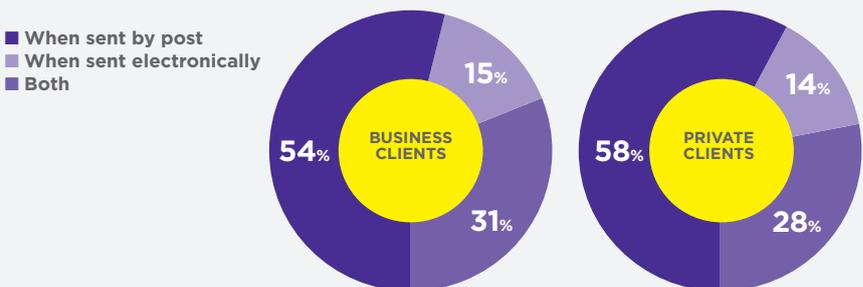
“Online portals take second place to **physical** post in **categories** such as seriousness and **trustworthiness**”

Security is another vital factor that survey respondents invoke in favour of the humble letter. Despite huge leaps forward in the realm of digital security, more than half of both the businesses and the individuals surveyed believe that confidential data is most secure when shared via post, with a mere 15% of private clients and 14% of businesses opting for electronic media as the safest option.

What is the impact of paper-based business correspondence?



Where does data seem safer?



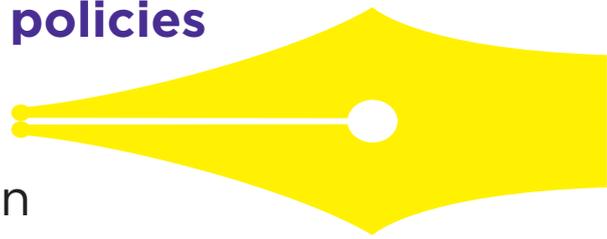
Nature of correspondence

Consumer preferences

Of course, choosing the right mode of communication depends to some extent on the nature of the correspondence. Whereas email has become the preferred option for receiving bills, for example, 56% of businesses and 37% of private clients still exchange physical contracts. Additionally, 39% of companies surveyed say that they receive insurance policies by post – higher than the percentage that use email, online portals or other methods.

Interestingly, the same patterns apply to signatures: although most survey respondents say that, for bills, they are equally content to sign electronically or by hand, when it comes to contracts and insurance policies they show a strong preference for handwritten signatures. Indeed, for the latter, only 13% of private clients and 12% of businesses would opt for an e-signature, whereas 57% of individuals and 58% of companies

“When it comes to **contracts and insurance policies** respondents show a strong **preference for handwritten signatures**”



incline towards the more personal equivalent. Whatever form of correspondence they are receiving, respondents agree that the freedom to see, at a glance, which country it has come from is a significant advantage of the postal service. More than two-thirds of private and business clients cite this as an important factor for contracts and insurance policies, with 70% of companies seeing a visible country of origin ID as a benefit for bills as well. Mail received from Switzerland is viewed in a particularly positive light, being associated with values such as

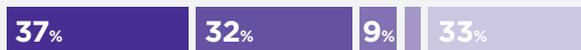
credibility (for 90% of private clients and 89% of businesses), security (for 88% of private clients and 86% of businesses), trustworthiness (for an impressive 92% of companies) and seriousness (for 87% of private clients).

13% of **private** clients would **opt** for an **e-signature**

How is business correspondence currently received?

PRIVATE CLIENTS

Contracts



Policies



Invoices



BUSINESS CLIENTS

Contracts



Policies



Invoices



■ By post ■ By e-mail ■ Through customer portals (e.g ex. e-banking) ■ By other methods of contact ■ I've never received mail from abroad

Values lower than nine are not rewritten.

Future of business communication

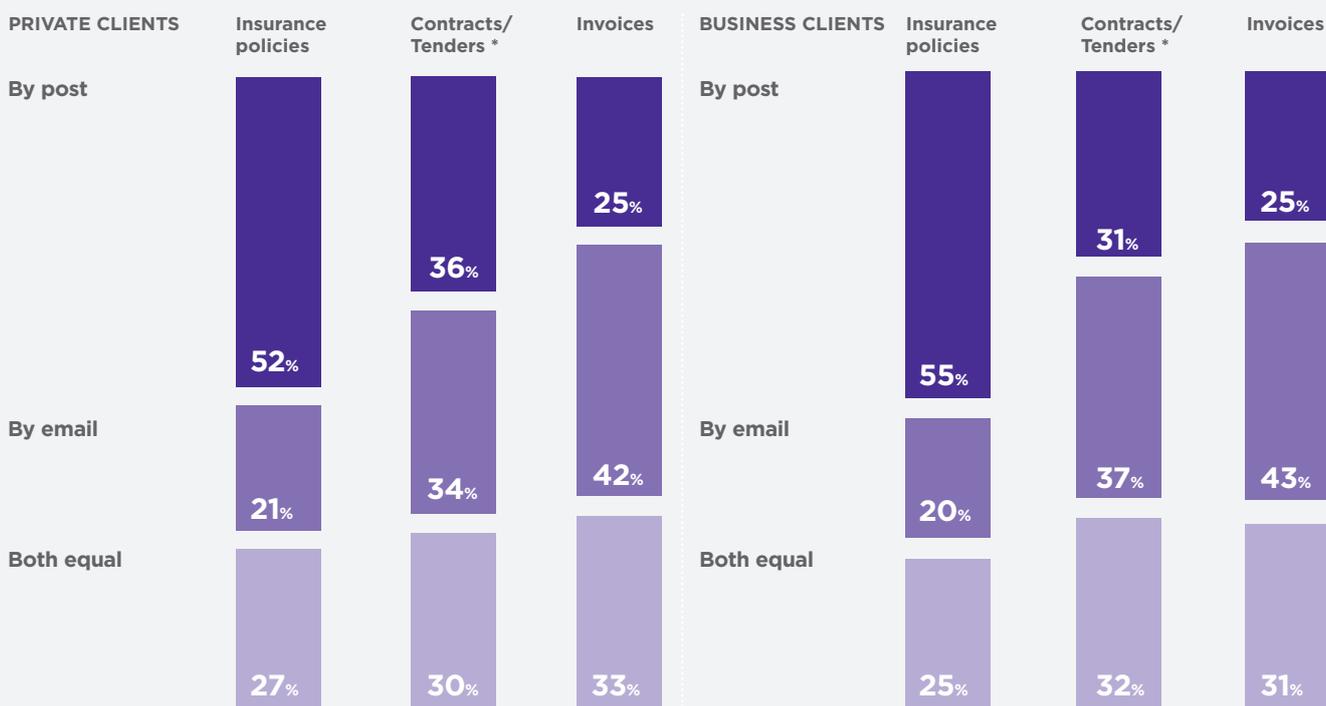
Where next?



So, what does all of this mean for the future of business communication? With 52% of private clients and 55% of companies anticipating that they will continue to exchange insurance policies by post and a quarter of both groups expecting to receive bills in

paper format, physical documents look set to retain their importance for those doing business on an international scale. The message is clear: for the highest levels of credibility, trust and security, the post has lost none of its commercial value.

What will the preferred mode of business correspondence be in the future?



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