



# Forwarding Expat Mail – Headaches, Hidden Costs and the Cure!

Are you and your mailroom staff tired of handling Expat Mail? Having a hard time keeping up with all the headaches of security and compliance issues, the endless paperwork and hassles of international shipping?

This whitepaper explores all the hidden costs of managing Expat Mail in-house and the high levels of risk and liability taken on in doing so. It will also address how to mitigate these costs and risks by outsourcing this non-core function from your HR team. This critical, yet cumbersome task is best handled by little known but well respected Mail Forwarding Companies - who are able to do this most efficiently at a fraction of the cost. The smart Expats are already using them, it's about time the smart companies did as well!"

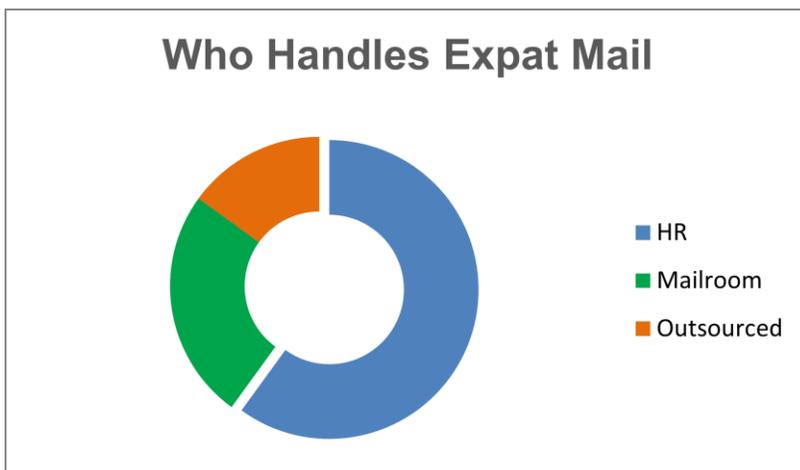
## People, Time and Resource Involvement

When relocating employees from their home country to a foreign assignment, companies realize that the transferee is most productive when the process is as seamless as possible. Lots of resources are expended in making the move smooth. But there is one detail – minor from the company's perspective – but a very important one for the Expat – Home Country Mail. The assignee is leaving his home but still needs to receive his mail/packages in the foreign location. This includes anything from IRS notices to birthday gifts from family or friends left behind. Very often this little detail – how will the Expat receive his mail is lost in the flurry of details and logistics connected to relocating an employee overseas. Often, it is handled by a patchwork of efforts utilizing the time, resources and talent of corporate HR and the company's internal mailroom.

The two common scenarios for this are:

COMPANY HR HANDLES MAIL FORWARDING

COMPANY MAILROOM HANDLES MAIL FORWARDING



## Headaches of Handling Expat Mail- real example

An Expat, on assignment in Venezuela, shipped an outboard motor to his company address, where it was added to the company shipment being sent to Venezuela. The company did not know that Venezuela had banned the import of motors.

The ENTIRE company shipment was held in customs for over 4 weeks causing an exceptional loss to the company. The company HR, Compliance and Legal departments had to get involved to sort out the messy issue. The hold-up of urgent materials in the shipment resulted in a big loss of company time, opportunity cost of utilization of resources for non-core activity, insurance and compliance costs.

### LIABILITY & COMPLIANCE ISSUES

- Company Shipment Hold Ups
- Compliance with HR/Employee Laws
- Security and Privacy Concerns

HR/MAILROOM STAFF - INCREASED COST FOR A NON-CORE ACTIVITY

## COMPANY HR HANDLES MAIL FORWARDING:

Most often, when the process for handling of expat mail is not well defined, it ends up in the hands of the company's global mobility or HR folks. Since they are the ones that coordinated everything else in the move, the Expat comes to rely on them to help with this as well. If your company HR is responsible for managing employee mail- the employee provides the HR department's designated address to everyone sending him or her mail and packages: banks, brokerage firms, government agencies, magazines, catalogs, online stores etc. Your HR department receives this mail and has to devote resources to sort and separate this mail by employee, repack it into larger packages and then forward it on to the employee either at the foreign corporate location or at the employee's home abroad.

## COMPANY MAILROOM HANDLES MAIL FORWARDING:

In some instances, when the company does have some procedures around it, the company mail room could be the one taking care of this. If the company allows the expat to forward their mail to the company mailroom, the mailroom staff receives sorts and packs the employee mail for forwarding. This means hiring additional resources to handle the extra volume of work. Often the mailroom employees are not experienced and trained on the ever changing international shipping requirements and have to go to Compliance or HR departments for approvals.

# Headaches of In house Expat Mail Handling

### Company Shipment Hold Ups

If you have expat mail and packages included in company shipments, there is a good chance at some point there will be an item in an expat's package that should not be in there. Customs will hold up the entire shipment until the very messy situation gets resolved. This could mean weeks of delay to mission critical company shipments.

**Real Example:** A company shipment to Saudi Arabia was held up for weeks because there was a Pokémon toy in the shipment (Pokémon's are banned for import into Saudi!).

### Compliance with HR/Employee Laws

Very often an Employee's mail is likely to have confidential personal information. Neither the employee nor the personnel in HR handling their mail are comfortable with the idea of the company viewing this information. Violations of HIPPA or other laws could happen almost inadvertently, resulting in dissatisfaction, problems of employee retention and sometimes even in lawsuits.

### Security And Privacy Concerns

Proper handling and security of mail is a serious concern and its compromise can result in devastating consequences. Companies handling Expat mail have to grapple with the very real problem of ensuring that it is not tampered with in any way. Very often employees overseas will have prescriptions, credit cards or other shopping and personal items. The mailroom/HR staff handling this must be properly trained and supervised to prevent any breach. And in spite of their best efforts, the Expat employee is still unhappy at having company staff going through personal mail.

**Real Example:** One company had 300 of their employees credit cards compromised from the company mailroom.

## Issues with using HR/Mailroom Staff- increased cost for a non-core activity

Taking on the handling of Expat mail means added cost for the company- the training and supervision needed to handle the intricacies of efficiently handling Expat mail adds several layers of cost to the HR and Mailroom budgets. It may make the departments appear busy, but in almost all cases it is work that is not core to the mission of the department. And very often it's not just these two functions, even other parts of the operation like Procurement and Logistics get roped in to help out with these Expat shipments. International shipping formalities customs paperwork wherein details like item name/part, origin, make, price etc. need to be detailed out take time. Questions come up routinely and have to be diverted to related departments adding a hidden but often overlooked cost of time and resources.

## REAL COST OF EXPAT MAIL

### ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Costs incurred in the form of management time and policy making.

### INTRA COMPANY COST SCHEDULING AND ALLOCATION

Costs of gathering mail and invoicing by departments or projects and time costs of allocating costs between departments.

### FEES AND FINES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE ISSUES

Export regulations fees and fines due to non-compliance and related costs of the domino effect due to delayed shipments.

### HARD TO QUANTIFY BUT REAL COST OF EMPLOYEE DISSATISFACTION

The loss of privacy and real or perceived delays in receiving mail can effect an employees' settling-in experience negatively.

## THE SOLUTION

**OUTSOURCE-** there simple solution to all of the problems listed above – using a Mail Forwarding Company to handle all of your relocated employee mail. Using a third party vendor will help you:

**GET RID OF COMPLIANCE AND REGULATION HASSLES**

**LOWER YOUR COSTS OF HANDLING EXPAT MAIL**

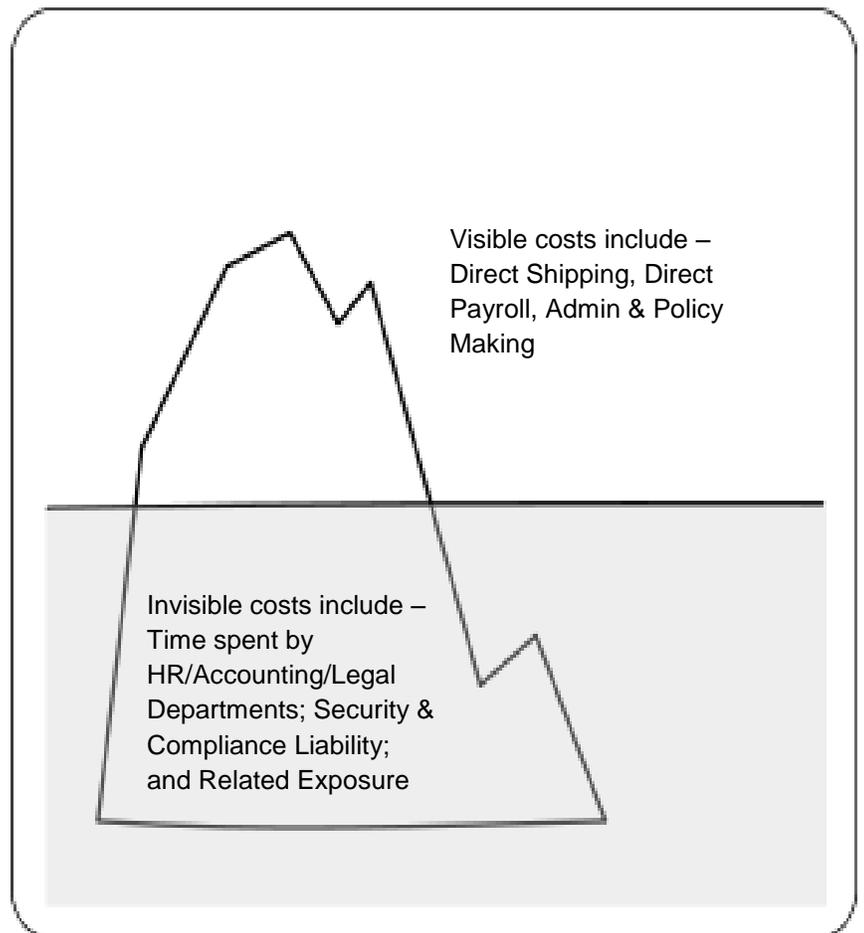
**INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND SAVINGS & GET CONTROL AND TRANSPARENCY**

# Hidden Costs of Mail Forwarding Spend

The cost element of Expat mail is important enough to consider in more detail. While calculating the cost for Expat Mail Forwarding, we often make the mistake of just considering the direct shipping costs and identifiable expenses associated with administration of it. The true costs which would include indirect costs of internal time and administration of policy and the costs for issues such as insurance, security, regulations compliance, privacy concerns, hold ups etc. are not clearly monetized and often overlooked. Looking at it in greater detail reveals some very interesting information- Most companies when asked for expenses related to Expat Mail Forwarding considered only the following:

Actual, identifiable expenses involved with receiving, sorting, repacking and shipping of employee mail.

Actual payroll, benefits, utilities, warehouse space, and overhead associated with mail room employees handling expat mail.





# The Solution...

## Outsource the headaches and lower your costs!

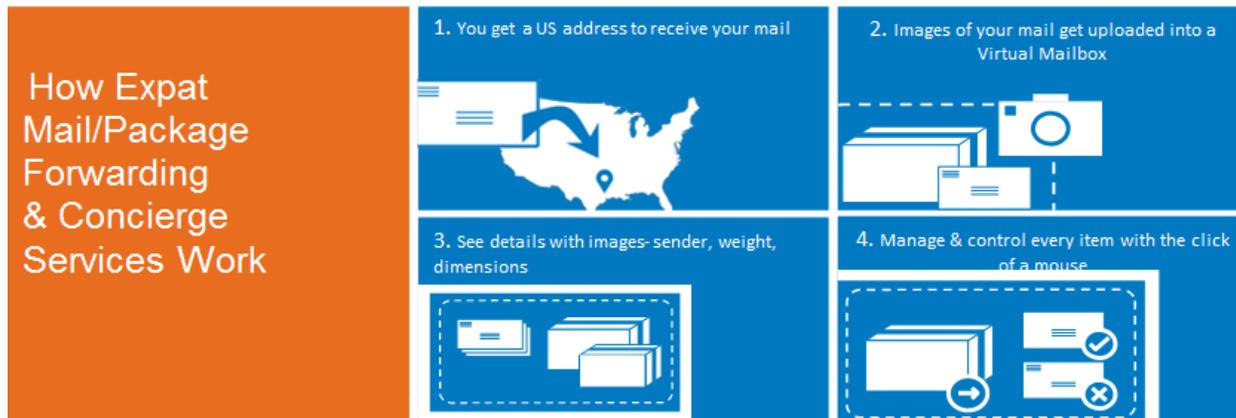
Mail forwarding companies have been around for some time, but few folks in the relocation space know about them and fewer still use them. These companies have come a long way from being the mom and pop operations where the relocated Expat would go to his local shipping store and ask them to forward his mail once a month.

Now there are some professionally run, technology rich companies which provide real time mail management solutions for all sizes and applications. These companies used the lessons learnt from serving individuals over the years and applied them to create enterprise ready solutions.

One company that is a prime example of this is US Global Mail. Starting out as a retail establishment in the 90's that was born out of a need from a section of its clientele it is today the leading provider of Mail Forwarding Solutions to the corporate world. We will try to understand how the solution works using their industry leading platform

### HOW DOES THE MAIL FORWARDING COMPANY WORK?

The way the service works for the expat is explained quite easily in the pictographic below. The whole process is quite simple and intuitive.



Before leaving ( or even afterwards, sometimes) the Expat is provided with a unique Mailing Address at US Global Mail's Houston, TX location. For all intents and purposes this becomes the Expat's address in the US. All his incoming mail can be directed to this address. As Mail comes in, an image of the outside is uploaded to a Virtual Mailbox (accessible only to the Expat), along with the dimensions and weight in case of packages. The Expat can log in anytime to see what mail has arrived for him at his Houston address and then decide what to ship and how to ship it. All of this is done online with just a few clicks of the mouse. Everything from Customs declarations to insurance and shipping is handled seamlessly. US Global Mail uses established vendors like FedEx, UPS, and DHL etc. so Expats can track all shipments from the minute they leave the warehouse in Houston all the way to the destination.

### SAFE, SECURE AND COST EFFECTIVE

US Global Mail has to register as a Certified Mail Receiving Agent with the USPS to be able to receive mail on behalf of its clients. All mail is handled securely and tracked with barcoded labels from the minute it is logged in at the warehouse. In addition to having well trained employees handling all mail, there is 24 hour video surveillance of the entire warehouse to ensure all mail is kept track of at all times.

There is complete confidentiality of all Expat mail. No US Global Mail employee opens any piece of mail without authorization from the client. For the individual, it also leads to significant cost savings. They are able to consolidate and save thousands versus individual shipments. In addition, volume savings from the Shippers means that clients pay much less than retail for shipments.

## EXTENDING THE INDIVIDUAL MODEL TO CORPORATES

US Global Mail has taken the individual Expat Mail Forwarding model and scaled it to enterprise levels. They are able to handle all levels of organizations – from 5 to 5000+ expats. They are able to provide a Customized Relocation Portal to companies with larger Expat populations. Using this, the companies can be as hands-on as they would like, to handle the process of providing Mail Forwarding Services. If companies are offering any form of support to Expats with their mail, using a service like US Global Mail is really a no brainer. Apart from the very tangible cost savings of less time and effort from company resources, the biggest gain comes from the reduction in compliance and liability costs – for something that was non-core to begin with!

Author: Randip Singh



[USGlobalMail.com](https://usglobalmail.com)  
1321 Upland Dr.  
Houston TX 77043

