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WORKERS' SNEAKY POSTAL 'FREEBIE' COSTING BRITISH COMPANIES £19.5 MILLION

- **4.5 million working Brits (21%) admit to slipping personal items into the mail at work^[1]**
- **68% say it's for convenience, but over one in ten (11%) see it as a way of getting a freebie from their employer or an 'unofficial perk'^[2]**
- **The majority (73%) are expected to pay for the cost of their post^[3], but over a quarter (26%) admit they don't always bother^[4]**
- **By not paying for the cost of their post, crafty workers save £23 a year on average – costing employers £19.5 million in total^[5].**

Have you ever sneakily slipped personal letters, parcels or packages into the post at work? A fifth (21%) of workers, or 4.5 million Brits, regularly do^[1], according to new research from [InvisibleHand](#), the free to download online shopping tool. And while it may seem fairly innocent, it is costing UK employers a whopping £19.5 million a year in additional postage costs^[5].

According to the study, three quarters (73%) of employers expect staff to repay the cost of sending personal mail^[3], yet over a quarter of employees using their work's post (26%) admit they don't always bother^[4]. These crafty workers save themselves £23 a year on average, but are leaving employers £19.5 million out of pocket^[5]. Men are the worst offenders costing their employers £30 a year in unpaid postage costs – more than double the amount female workers get away with (£13)^[5].

For 68% of workers, convenience is the main reason for slipping items into the work's post (67%)^[2]. Britain's long working hours culture also plays a part, with 36% of workers resenting the time it takes to queue up at the post office and 16% claiming that they are too busy working to be able to sort out their personal post^[2]. However, over one in ten (11%) simply see it as a way of getting a freebie or an 'unofficial perk' out of their employer, while a further one in ten workers (11%) admit to sneaking their letters into the postal tray simply because everybody else at work is doing it^[2].

What the average British worker sends through their work's mail^[6]:

Item	Average number sent per year
General post	8
Christmas cards	7
Birthday cards	3
Parcels	3
Overseas letters	2
Registered/recorded post	2
Online shopping returns	1

Source: InvisibleHand

As well as postage costs, employers are also incurring the cost of acting like a free postal delivery service for staff. With the popularity of online shopping and many workers now opting to have things like mobile phones or valuable items delivered to work rather than home, British workers now receive an average of 39 items of personal post at work each year^[7].

Robin Landy, founder of InvisibleHand says: "A letter here or a parcel there may not seem a big deal, but British companies are losing £19.5 million a year as a result of staff slipping personal items into the work's post. It could be argued that they are paying the cost of Britain's long working hours culture, but nobody could deny that employers are also unknowingly paying the price for our ongoing love affair with online shopping.

"Online shopping has the convenience factor, especially for stressed-out workers. The downside is that sometimes you have to pay the cost of delivery or to send items back again. That's why it's so important to shop around before clicking the 'buy' button. Don't take online prices at face value – you also need to know about the cost of postage and returns, which in the case of some retailers may even be free. This doesn't have to take time – you can download and use InvisibleHand on your computer for free and it will do the hard work for you, telling you which retailers sell the product you want and at what price. You can then very quickly check the postage and returns policy before clicking on 'buy'."

InvisibleHand is free to download in less than a minute via the website, www.getinvisiblehand.com.

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Note to editors:

Please note: the correct way to write InvisibleHand is as one-word, with capitalisations at the start of both words

Research referred to in the notes below was conducted by Easy in-Sites in May 2011 on behalf of InvisibleHand in an online survey of 1,003 UK adults aged 18+.

1. In response to: 'Do you ever use your employer's postal system to send personal letters or parcels?' 14.70% said 'yes, sometimes', 3.10% said 'yes- often' and 3.10% said 'yes – always'. These add up to 21% of workers. According to ONS there are 21.3 million employed in the UK: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=12>. 21% of 21.3 million = 4,473,000.
2. In response to: 'Why do you send personal items through your work's post system?'
3. In response to: 'Does your work/company expect you to pay for personal items posted at work?'
4. Asked of those who said their company expects them to pay for personal post: 'Do you pay your company the cost of the postage?' 73.80% said 'always'. 26% made up by: 12.5% said 'often', 5% 'sometimes', 3.8% 'not if I can get away with it' and 4% 'never'.
5. 73% say their employer expects them to repay the cost of postage: 73% of 4,473,000 (see note 1 above) = 3,265,290. Of those workers who are expected to repay their employer, 26% admit to not always repaying the cost (see note 4 above): 26% of 3,265,290 = 848,975. In response to: 'Over the last year, how much do you think you have saved by not paying your company back for postal charges?' Average saving was £23. 848,975 x £23 = **£19,526,425** (£19.5 million).
6. In response to: 'How many of the following personal postal items did you send from work in the last year?'
7. In response to: 'How many items a year on average (personal post) do you receive at work?'

About InvisibleHand

InvisibleHand is a free price-finder tool for online shoppers and travellers who want to be confident they have found the best price before clicking the 'buy' button. Instead of undertaking painstaking online research or relying on the out-of-date prices on shopping & flight comparison sites; consumers can download and install InvisibleHand on their computer for free. Once installed, the next time you go shopping InvisibleHand will work behind the scenes to automatically find the best price on products & flights, no matter where you're searching on the web.

InvisibleHand's price alerts appear in a temporary, drop-down bar when a better deal is found on over 60 million products and airfares. To-date, InvisibleHand has been downloaded by over 1.8 million people and has already found savvy online shoppers over £62 million worth of savings in the UK alone.

InvisibleHand is free and easy to download from www.getinvisiblehand.com.

InvisibleHand is part of the Forward Internet Group, a privately funded collection of internet-based businesses focused on consumer engagement and innovation.