

Managing a Post Office creates a unique position for retailers and their businesses within a community. Subpostmasters are proud of their long and trusted history and there is no doubt that Post Office branches are integral to their community.

Post Office branches are more than just postage and parcel receivers; they are trusted financial service providers, Bureau de Change, phone and broadband providers and offer essential services to their customers.

MAKING AN APPLICATION

Before applying to operate one, you must be certain that it is right for your business.

At present, the Post office operates over 11,500 branches. There are no planned closures nor do Post Office Ltd intend increasing the network. However, Post Office will occasionally advertise availability of a new franchise in a specific location to ensure national coverage targets are met. Search availability at www.runapostoffice.co.uk.

If you are interested in obtaining a Post office, you can do so in one of two ways:

- a) Acquire a business which includes a Post Office
- b) Apply for a branch which becomes available within your immediate area.

In both cases, it would be the same application process irrespective of the type or size of the branch. The application process itself can take 3 to 6 months plus and:

- » **Is very detailed**
- » **Has strict criteria**
- » **Has time limits and deadlines**
- » **Is time-consuming**

Retailers can prepare their own applications, however, if assistance is required, you can contact the Network Business Support Centre. Alternatively, as a member of the NFRN, you can access the services of SubPostmaster.com who offer 30 minutes free advice in addition to discounted rates thereafter. Being experts in the field, they can take the stress out of the whole process and offer on-going support packages as well as guidance on buying, selling or transferring a business which includes a Post Office.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Existing Post Offices designated as a 'Community Branch' may apply for a grant from Post Office Ltd to develop and improve their business.

To apply, visit www.postofficecommunityfund.co.uk where you will be able to complete the application form. Please ensure that you read the terms and conditions very carefully before submitting your application.

The three primary objectives of the Community Fund are to:

- » **Support the growth of Post Office business in the community by investing in branch specific improvements.**
- » **Bring benefits to the Post Office customers.**
- » **Bring benefits to the Subpostmaster's overall business and support the Post Office.**

A list of frequently asked questions is detailed on their website to help you through the application process.

HORIZON SYSTEM

All staff must be security cleared by Post Office Ltd before receiving full training on all products and services. This is carried out in the form of a work book and test via the Horizon system. Each member of staff is required to complete and pass the test and is given a specific period of time in which to do so - this can be anything from one week to three weeks.

Print outs of all completed tests need to be kept with work books as the Post Office can carry out a compliance audit at any time and it is the responsibility of the Subpostmaster to ensure that all his/her staff are compliant.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR PROFIT?

Profit margins may not be as high as you might expect, but by training staff in up-selling and cross-selling, margins and income can be improved.

- » **When asked for stamps, offer special delivery or ask, "do you need this signed for?"**
- » **When customers pay by debit card, ask if they would like to withdraw any cash as payments are made for each withdrawal.**
- » **During the Christmas period promote gift cards to customers to give as presents.**

CAN I SET MY OWN PRICE FOR STAMPS?

If you have a Post Office, you have a contractual agreement which sets out the terms and conditions relating to the sale of retail products and you must adhere to the prices set therein. If you do not have a Post Office, there does not appear to be any legislation or regulations which dictate that a retailer can only sell stamps at face value. Therefore, it is unknown whether this would breach any laws and lead to a criminal prosecution. If you were interviewed under caution about a possible offence, or if criminal proceedings were brought against you, as a member of the NFRN, you would be covered under our extensive legal policy and would be appointed a lawyer to represent you.

PROMOTING PRODUCTS

We would recommend that every Subpostmaster sets up a Sales Calendar for each month of the year to help generate sales. An example would be:

January	February	March
Post Office Money Budget Card Christmas Club	Savings Reward Saver Premier Cash ISA Junior ISA Growth Bond	Savings Reward Saver Premier Cash ISA Junior ISA Growth Bond
April	May	June
Broadband & Phone Home Phone Broadband	Travel Promotion Travel Insurance Travel Money Travel Moneycard Plus Passports	Travel Promotion Travel Insurance Travel Money Travel Moneycard Plus Passports
July	August	September
Travel Promotion Travel Insurance Travel Money Travel Moneycard Plus Passports	Travel Promotion Travel Insurance Travel Money Travel Moneycard Plus Passports	Insurance Home Insurance Over 50 Home Insurance Car Insurance Over 50 Car Insurance
October	November	December
Broadband & Phone Home Phone Broadband	Mail Sending in the UK International Letter Services	Mail Sending in the UK International Letter Services

Useful Contact Details

NFRN Connect	0800-121-6376
Subpostmaster.com – via NFRN Connect	0800-121-6376