



10 QUESTIONS

TO INCLUDE IN A DIGITAL MAILROOM REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

You understand the benefits and cost savings generated by an outsourced digital mailroom.

Now you're ready to explore and research digital mailroom suppliers. Asking the right questions will help you identify the most qualified partner to provide this critical digital solution.

The logo for Docufree, featuring the word "docufree" in a sans-serif font. "docu" is in blue and "free" is in green. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the word "free". The logo is set against a light gray rounded rectangular background.

docufree®



A logical first step is to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). Structured RFQs allow you to “compare apples to apples” and identify the strengths, weaknesses, and differences in capabilities, processes, industry-specific experience, security protocols, and more.

An RFQ helps cast a wide net. You can narrow the search to a select group of suppliers based on the responses received. You’ll likely choose three or four finalists and then issue a Request for Proposal (RFP). With an RFP, you can dig deeper into details such as exact project specifications, requirements and cost.

This probably sounds great, but what questions do you ask a potential digital mailroom supplier in an RFQ?

This quick guide will help you map it out.

In the more than 40 years we have been in business, our experts have seen their share of RFQs and RFPs and answered all kinds of questions for potential clients. Along with the essential items — such as the organization name and the main point of contact — we’ve compiled a list of 10 questions to include when creating your digital mailroom RFQ. You can also find a one-page checklist on **page 13**.

Remember, choosing a BPO partner is a consultative, collaborative process. An initial discussion can help the supplier more clearly understand your goals, concerns, opportunities and limitations. Any clarifying information you can provide to all suppliers at the start will help RFQ respondents craft a response more closely tailored to your company’s short and long-term needs.

LET’S GET STARTED.



Q1

PLEASE SHARE A BRIEF COMPANY OVERVIEW.

Include the following items:

- LOCATIONS OF FACILITIES
- NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES GLOBALLY
- YEARS IN BUSINESS
- CAPITAL STRUCTURE (PRIVATELY OWNED, PUBLIC, PRIVATE EQUITY)
- THE SUPPLIER'S UNIQUE COMPETITIVE SERVICE OFFERINGS OR ADVANTAGES • ANY EXTERNAL COMPLIANCE OR QUALITY CERTIFICATIONS
- INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC EXPERTISE OR CASE STUDY EXAMPLES
- DOES THE SUPPLIER HAVE A DISASTER RECOVERY (DR) PLAN AND, IF SO, INCLUDE A BRIEF OVERVIEW
- THE LEVEL(S) OF PRIMARY LIABILITY INSURANCE COVERAGE

TIP:

ASKING A PROSPECTIVE SUPPLIER FOR A BRIEF OVERVIEW HELPS YOU GET A SENSE OF WHAT THEY'RE ALL ABOUT. This overview can include information like how long the company has been in business, their core values, and what kind of experience they have in your industry. Understanding the company right from the start is a simple way to avoid spending time on proposals from suppliers that aren't a good match.

These answers can also provide clues into the supplier's stability. Have they been in business for

only a few years? Are they expanding or downsizing? Have they kept up with industry-standard compliance and quality certifications? What kinds of technology and software are in place to support operations? Are their core service offerings lining up with other companies you're exploring? In the case of an emergency or disaster, are they prepared?

At a minimum, a digital mailroom supplier should comply with quality management systems (ISO 9001) and compliance, safeguards and management of customer data (SOC 2).



Q2

WHAT IS THE TYPICAL PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING A DIGITAL MAILROOM WITH A NEW CLIENT?

Please outline any implementation risks and strategies to mitigate identified risks. How long (typically) before a new client is up and running?

TIP:

THIS QUESTION IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SUPPLIER'S TYPICAL IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS. An experienced supplier will be able to easily supply a general implementation outline. It should include the names and/or titles of key players who would oversee each phase, identify any possible risks throughout the project and strategies to mitigate those risks. A reputable digital mailroom supplier will expect this question.

Asking about the implementation process also sets the stage for a productive and successful relationship with the supplier you ultimately choose to work with. The supplier will understand you're interested in detailed processes and timelines, and

they will likely appreciate your interest in creating clear, mutually-agreeable plans and timelines if the project were to progress.

Plus, asking about a typical timeframe for implementation helps you work backward to incorporate a digital mailroom into your budget and strategize on managing internal resources. Finally, implementation can take more than a few months depending on your organization's needs, process complexities and other factors — like transitioning PO Boxes and processing Permanent Change of Address (COA) orders. Understanding the timeline at the start will help ensure the expectations of all parties are aligned.



Q3

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR PROCESSES TO ENSURE ALL INCOMING DATA AND DOCUMENTS ARE SECURE ONCE THEY ARRIVE AT YOUR FACILITY.

How are documents stored before they're digitized? Include:

- any compliance certifications or externally validated compliance audits
- security measures in place within the software to protect confidential data
- security measures within the physical facility
- staff training on compliance, ethics and data handling

TIP:

WHEN YOU ASK A PROSPECTIVE SUPPLIER ABOUT DATA SECURITY AND DOCUMENT STORAGE IN AN RFQ, YOU WANT PEACE OF MIND THAT YOUR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION WILL BE WELL-PROTECTED BEFORE IT ENTERS THE DIGITIZATION PROCESS. The physical facility's security measures are essential, of course. Make sure the supplier can also outline how their team members are trained.

Are staff allowed to utilize cell phones on the production floor? Is access to the facility (or specific areas within it) badge-restricted? Does the supplier

keep logs to determine who entered which areas? Do they know who accessed or viewed files after digitizing? Does the supplier have a fire protection service installed or 24/7 cameras on-site?

You might even want to request a virtual or in-person site tour to get a better feel of where your information will be processed. Any reputable supplier will be able and willing to share these details. You should be 100% confident your company's sensitive information is safe from when it arrives on site until its secure destruction.



Q4

WHAT QUALITY ASSURANCE METRICS OR SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (SLAs) SHOULD I EXPECT?

How do you handle ad hoc requests or variances in volume?

TIP:

WHEN A PROCESS RELIES ON ACCESSING IMPORTANT PHYSICAL FILES OR PAPERWORK — like occupational health records or insurance claims data — your team needs information as quickly as possible.

In a typical digital mailroom setup, most SLAs are set to 12-48 hours of inbound mail receipt, depending on type of documents received. A seasoned mailroom supplier will never allow inbound mail to sit for more than one to two business days unprocessed.

Digital mailroom suppliers should also keep up with hardware and technological advances to streamline processes even further. Some open mail, prep and scan immediately. Everything is handled on one machine, and documents do not shift to different machines, people or workstations.

Every supplier's process is different, and in addition to technology, the supplier must also demonstrate expertise in quality and process efficiencies. Can the supplier evidence a commitment to continuous improvement and defined standards and processes around accuracy and quality? Most digital mailrooms should be able to deliver very high rates of accuracy for indexing and data capture, supported by a formalized process for doing so. We'll explore indexing more on the following page.

The second part of this question will help you understand a supplier's staffing plan in cases of higher-than-normal daily volumes. If you anticipate significant peaks and valleys in your inbound mail volumes — whether by week, month or quarter — include that note in your question. This information will help a supplier address your company's needs in their response.



Q5

DO YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO EXTRACT DATA FROM MY DIGITIZED DOCUMENTS (INDEXING) FOR EASY SEARCH AND RETRIEVAL?

Please outline your process for handling structured documents, unstructured documents and checks.

TIP:

IMPLEMENTING A DIGITAL MAILROOM WILL HELP ROUTE IMPORTANT INFORMATION SECURELY AND QUICKLY. But the second part of the equation is extracting usable data from scanned documents using systematic and manual processes. Software forms the base platform for many companies' document and data capture services. The way a supplier answers this question will help you understand exactly what they offer and how they can extract your data.

Some may use a mix of out-of-the-box software, proprietary software, customization and human keying to meet each client's needs. In the case of manual keying by individuals, you'll want to understand if the data capture services will be done onshore, offshore or a combination of both.

You'll also want to look for the supplier's ability to receive and process checks. Can they scan incoming checks and provide a log of the relevant data? Does the supplier return the checks to you for processing? Or can they process direct deposits so your business receives payments faster?

And finally, this question helps you understand the supplier's ability (or inability) to extract data from not only structured documents like forms but unstructured documents and hand-written notations.

A more sophisticated supplier should be able to explain an automated process where relevant structured and unstructured data is validated by two- or three-way pairing. In this setup, the scanned documents are matched against supplier master files to ensure accuracy and move documents along more quickly without manual intervention.

NOTE: If you hadn't initially considered using indexing and the related workflow and automation benefits in your digital mailroom project, ask this question anyway. You want to be sure the supplier you choose has the ability to integrate this service when you are ready. Indexing is a real value-add when it comes to getting the most out of a digital mailroom solution.

Indexing will also unlock opportunities to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) and other automation workflows. When you're ready, you can pair indexing with optical character recognition and intelligent capture recognition — OCR and ICR, respectively — and your digital mailroom function shifts completely. It is no longer about ingesting paper or faxes; it's about gleaning usable business data for smarter operational decisions and unlocking robust automation solutions to optimize processes. The most important thing at this stage is to ask the question of your supplier so you can eventually get the most benefit from your digital mailroom.

Q6

HOW AND WHEN ARE DOCUMENTS SENT BACK TO OUR TEAM MEMBERS IN A DIGITAL MAILROOM SETUP?

TIP:

MAKING THE DECISION TO IMPLEMENT A DIGITAL MAILROOM IS ONE THING. IRONING OUT ALL OF THE DETAILS, LOGISTICS AND EXPECTATIONS ARE ANOTHER. This question will help you understand what happens with your documents after digitization. Must you use the supplier's online document hosting platform? Or can the supplier help to integrate digitized documents into your existing, preferred system via API, web service, database or SFTP?

You'll also want to understand the format in which the files will be transferred to your team and when. As we mentioned earlier, most digital mailroom SLAs are between 12-48 hours. Some digital mailroom suppliers can send documents back even faster

— depending on the requirements for processing inbound documents in real time or taking a batch and send in bulk approach. If your documents must be transferred in compliance with HIPAA rules or another specific security measure, note those details within this question.

Digital mailrooms add a surprising amount of value. Workflows and processes to automate approvals; provide insights, data and reporting; and eliminate manual, duplicate, and inefficient processes are just the tip of the iceberg. If the supplier doesn't initially offer a complimentary assessment of your current workflows and processes to help you determine the best course of action — **ask!**



Q7

WHAT IS YOUR PROCESS FOR GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNICATION?

How are issues handled or escalated?

••• TIP:

THIS QUESTION DETERMINES IF A SUPPLIER HAS A WELL-DEFINED PROCESS FOR MAKING DECISIONS, HANDLING ISSUES AND ENSURING THE SAME PROBLEMS DO NOT RE-OCCUR IN THE FUTURE. A structured communication system should be in place with assigned individuals to address issues timely. Be sure you'll be able to communicate with the appropriate individuals within the company easily and efficiently after the contract is signed. The last thing you want to do is choose a digital mailroom based on conversations with an

easily-reachable and responsive sales rep and then realize communication with other team members is strained, sporadic or non-existent.

A formalized governance structure also allows for consistent project and process reviews. Pre-defined opportunities to reconnect on an established timeline is best practice to keep all parties informed and engaged, rather than waiting to connect only when issues arise.



Q8

DO YOU OFFER TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION OR ANY OTHER SECURE MESSAGING TOOLS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE AND SECURITY OF DATA?

TIP:

TAKING EVERY PRECAUTION TO PROTECT YOUR INFORMATION ONCE IT'S BEEN DIGITIZED IS ESSENTIAL. Enabling two-factor authentication on your accounts adds an extra layer of security by requiring the user to enter a code from a physical device in addition to their password. This means that even if a hacker knows a user's password, they won't be able to access an account without also having possession of a user's phone or other physical device. As a result, two-factor authentication can be a valuable defense against cybercrime. It also prevents unauthorized internal users from viewing information they are not privy to.

Firewalls, VPN capability and IP protocols are typically in place to ensure the security of staff and customer data. Additional suggestions to protect data include: using encryption (256 bit if possible); transferring

information through File Transfer Protocol (FTP); and password protecting your files. A reputable supplier will be able to illustrate the availability of security options like these.

A supplier's answer to this question will also help you determine if they offer a secure messaging tool to alert employees they have received an encrypted digital message. Some suppliers offer capabilities to send secure messages internally and to individuals outside the organization.

If your organization must adhere to certain security requirements (like HIPAA) it's a good idea to note that in your question so the supplier can respond with appropriate details.



Q9

HOW ARE DOCUMENTS STORED OR DESTROYED AFTER DIGITIZATION?

Do you provide these services on-site or sub-contract

● ● ● TIP:

AFTER YOUR DOCUMENTS ARE DIGITIZED, WHAT'S NEXT? You'll need to determine if shredding within a certain time (maybe 30, 60 or 90 days) is best or if you'd like your processed paper mail returned to your office(s). Also, depending

on your industry, you may be required to maintain paper records for a pre-determined time frame. If you already know what you might need, it's not a bad idea to include those details in this question to validate that the supplier can handle your request.

Q10

PROVIDE 3-4 REFERENCES TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR POSITION AS A DIGITAL MAILROOM EXPERT.

● ● ● TIP:

SOCIAL PROOF IS BECOMING ALMOST MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY KIND OF SALES PITCH, so of course you'd want to ask this question to determine what other clients and brands trust this supplier to handle their inbound mail and documents.

It is important to note that digital mailroom suppliers are extremely sensitive to security and privacy. For this reason, a prospective supplier may not provide you with a list of client names and references in the RFQ stage. Under contractual agreements, suppliers may also be prohibited from sharing client information when responding to RFQs.

Suppose a supplier offers to provide references later in the selection process but cannot provide any details in response to the initial RFQ. This is not a

red flag. Not sharing customer names and reference details up front is very common in the SAAS space.

But, if a supplier is able to share this information in response to an RFQ, it's always interesting to learn more about which clients have selected the supplier for digital mailroom work.

Even though not all suppliers can share client names and contact information in the RFQ stage, any experienced digital mailroom supplier should be able to provide a blind case study or two to demonstrate their capabilities. As potential suppliers move through your selection process, they should be open to giving references during a subsequent phase.



Asking these initial digital mailroom RFQ questions can help you narrow your search to a short list of potential partners. After you choose a handful of suppliers that demonstrate the capabilities most important to you, you'll want to ask even more detailed questions about how each supplier would handle your specific work, how they would help you meet your short and long term mail-handling goals, and what an actual implementation would look like.

Creating an RFQ and moving through a formal process to choose a digital mailroom provider does take time. But, by asking the right questions up front, you'll be able to identify a trusted supplier that best positions you to reap the benefits of a digital mailroom.



The experts at Docufree Digital Solutions leverage digitization to accelerate business processes and automate workflows. We become a trusted, long-term partner to organizations that must stay compliant, competitive and agile in an ever-changing environment. As a business process outsourcing expert, we help clients transform middle office processes such as mailrooms, backfile scanning and outbound customer communications (print, mail and digital) into efficient processes while mitigating risk. Our clients harness the power of real-time data, reporting and business insights to make informed, forward-looking decisions that positively impact the bottom line.

**WE'RE EAGER TO PUT
OUR EXPERTISE TO
WORK FOR YOU.**

DIGITAL MAILROOM REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)



Q1 Please share a brief company overview. Include the following items:

- locations of facilities
- number of employees globally
- years in business
- the company's unique competitive service offerings or advantages
- any external compliance or quality certifications
- industry-specific expertise or case study examples
- does the supplier have a Disaster Recovery (DR) plan and, if so, include a brief overview
- the level(s) of your primary liability insurance coverage

Q2 What is the typical process for implementing a digital mailroom with a new client? Please outline any implementation risks and strategies to mitigate identified risks? How long (typically) before a new client is up and running?

Q3 Please describe your processes to ensure all incoming data and documents are secure once they arrive at your facility. How are documents stored before they're digitized? Include:

- any compliance certifications or externally validated compliance audits
- security measures in place within the software to protect confidential data
- security measures within the physical facility
- staff training on compliance, ethics and data handling

Q4 What quality assurance metrics or service level agreements (SLAs) should I expect? How do you handle ad hoc requests or variances in volume?

Q5 Do you have the ability to extract data from my digitized documents (indexing) for easy search and retrieval? Please outline your process for handling structured documents, unstructured documents and checks.

Q6 How and when are documents sent back to our team members in a digital mailroom setup?

Q7 What is your process for governance and communication? How are issues handled or escalated?

Q8 Do you offer two-factor authentication or any other secure messaging tools to ensure compliance and security of data?

Q9 Post-scanning, how are documents stored or destroyed after they're digitized? Please note if you provided these services on-site or if you sub-contract this service.

Q10 Please provide 3-4 references or case studies to demonstrate your position as a digital mailroom expert.