

The Remote Startup

How a virtual mailbox helped **Basecamp**
go fully remote



ORGANIZATION

Basecamp

INDUSTRY

Technology, Startup

MISSION

Basecamp helps growing companies organize their projects, internal communications, and client work in one place to have a central source of truth. People know what to do, they know where things are, it's clear where things stand, and everyone is accountable. Always working towards a more perfect system, Basecamp helps groups of people keep organized to do their best work with their team, in their company, and for their own customers.



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Summary

Founded in 1999 as 37signals, Basecamp offers a project management solution that helps remote teams of all shapes and sizes get organized and keep their work on track. Basecamp's team is also responsible for inventing the very popular programming framework Ruby on Rails and the email platform HEY. With 40+ employees spanning various cities, Basecamp is now a fully remote company, but that wasn't always the case.

Challenges

Basecamp had an office in the Chicago area starting in 2010, but the office became nonessential with a widely distributed workforce. Navid Afshar, senior administrative assistant, shared, "Basecamp had been a huge promoter of remote work for two decades, so having an office became a "nice to have" commodity. It was eventually not cost-effective when the COVID-19 pandemic hit [in March of 2020] and pushed us [to become completely remote]."



While the company was already on its way to becoming fully remote, there was one challenge left to solve - postal mail. Managing postal mail was one of Navid's responsibilities. In his words, Basecamp was "trying to find a way to make [his] job 100% remote like everyone else's. While Navid could do most of his work remotely, postal mail was the last piece of the puzzle. Navid said, "[Mail] was the only thing tying me to Chicago, IL."

To solve their postal mail problem, Basecamp explored a few options. Initially, they experimented with a PO Box and a UPS Mailbox; however, neither of these options met their needs. Navid shared, "everything would go to the PO Box, and I would have to check it weekly. That was fine, but not ideal."

The Problem at Large

While a PO Box or UPS Mailbox allowed Basecamp to shut down its office, the fundamental problem remained - postal mail is essential to run a business and necessitates a physical location. Tying postal mail to one physical location could present challenges if Navid moved or went on an extended vacation. There had to be a better solution.

Solution

Fortunately, Basecamp was able to find a better option: Earth Class Mail. After learning about Earth Class Mail's virtual mail solutions on Twitter, Navid continued his research. One of Navid's most significant priorities was finding a solution to handle the company's private and confidential documents securely. Navid shared, "We receive tax statements, employee W2s, and all our important documentation in the mail - some with the owner's tax ID number. Before speaking to Earth Class Mail, one of our biggest reservations was the privacy and security of our documents."

Fortunately, Earth Class Mail met Basecamp's privacy requirements and product needs. The team signed up for a Business MailRoom offering in July of 2020. Basecamp now benefits from features like mail scanning, mail forwarding, and check deposits - Basecamp's favorite feature.

"The check deposit feature has been easy to use and a smooth experience.

I just click 'deposit' [and the money is in our bank account in a couple of days]. We are very happy with that feature", adds Navid.

Basecamp also uses the mail sorting and forwarding features. Mail sorting has helped reduce postal mail clutter. Navid shared that with the Earth Class Mail mail sorting feature, "all of the [unwanted mail] doesn't even reach us. That's huge."

Results

Accessing their postal mail online has allowed Basecamp to become fully remote, save time, and become more productive.

Navid shared that his time on postal mail is reduced by 50%. Before Earth Class Mail, Navid spent about 30 minutes to an hour dealing with postal mail every week, and it dropped down to 15 minutes every week.

Before signing up with Earth Class Mail, handling postal mail was an unwelcome chore. Navid shared his prior experience with postal mail, "Pick up, open, scan, destroy, and sort through the mail." Now, handling postal mail is much faster. Navid now enjoys a different experience, "look, download, and save to our internal archives - simple!."