

Botswana Business Reply Mail

by Gordon Smith

Business reply mail is a service in which a mailer provides pre-addressed and prepaid return cards or envelopes to customers who can use them to respond to the mailer without paying for postage, as the mailer pays the return postage. The provision of business reply cards or envelopes is an extra inducement to customers to reply, since the customer does not pay the return postage, does not have to supply a postcard or envelope, and does not need to put an address on the reply item.⁽¹⁾

Business reply mail is frequently used by direct marketers seeking to encourage orders, researchers needing survey responses, magazine publishers soliciting subscriptions or gathering feedback on their publications, and businesses presenting product offers or facilitating bill payments. Businesses like to use business reply mail as it helps them to optimize the response rate for their advertising and direct mail campaigns.

Since the postal service only collects the applicable postage plus a per-piece fee on pieces that customers actually send back to the mailer, the mailer only pays for postage on the business reply mail if the customer uses it. This allows mailers to save postage costs on large volumes of distributed reply mail when a response is uncertain.

The mailer obtains a licence to use this system and provides a deposit to the post office from which the cost of postage is deducted at a fixed and sometimes discounted rate for large volumes of mail. In South Africa, the company using the business reply service has to use a post office box or private bag, which keeps a tally of the number of cards coming back to the business's the box or private bag and is another expense payable to the post office. When a minimum level against the deposit is reached, the Post Office places a note in the box or bag requesting a top up.⁽³⁾ While the mailer prints the business reply envelopes or cards, their design must conform to specifications established by the post office. The cost of producing these items and their distribution is the responsibility of the mailer.

The business reply service was enabled in the High Commission Territories (Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and Swaziland) as early as 1934 (see Figure 1). Figures 2 and 3 show examples of business reply cards used by businesses in South Africa in the mid-20th century prior to Botswana independence. As noted in the upper left corner, postage was paid by the addressee (mailer) and in right corner, the text indicates that no postage stamp needed to be affixed to the item if it was posted in the Union of South Africa, Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate, or Swaziland. While these countries ceased being High Commission Territories upon their independence in the 1960's, it appears that the ability to use the service between these countries remained in place at least until the 1980's and that the resolution of postal charges was an internal matter between the post offices that did not concern the mailer.⁽⁴⁾

The cards in Figures 2 and 3 are largely similar but have slightly different text in the upper right and they use different fonts and font sizes throughout. The licence number in Figure 3 is also preceded by the letter "J", which would appear to indicate that the licence was issued by the local post office of the mailer, Johannesburg.

In Botswana, section 11(4)(b) of the Post Office Act of 1980 enables regulations to be established permitting the use

HIGH COMMISSIONER'S NOTICE No. 98 OF 1934.

It is hereby notified for general information that, under the provisions of sub-section (4) of section *three* and section *four* of Act No. 10 of 1911 of the Union of South Africa, as in force in Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland, His Excellency the High Commissioner has been pleased to approve of the subjoined Postal Regulations, with effect from the 1st August, 1934.

By Command of His Excellency the
High Commissioner.

SHIRLEY EALES,
Administrative Secretary.

High Commissioner's Office,
Pretoria, 28th July, 1934.

BUSINESS REPLY CARDS AND ENVELOPES.

REGULATIONS.

(a) The Postmaster-General may, on such conditions as he may determine, subject to the provisions hereof, issue a licence to any person to receive postcards, envelopes, folders or portions of reply cards, issued by the licensee, and designed for use by the addressee in replying to the licensee, upon which postage has not been prepaid.

(b) The licence shall not cover the use of any such cards, envelopes, folders or portions of reply cards which do not conform to specifications prescribed by the Postmaster-General and complete printed proofs of such cards, envelopes, folders or portions of reply cards shall be submitted by the licensee to the Postmaster-General for approval before being used.

(c) The licensee shall make and maintain a deposit with the Postmaster-General of an amount sufficient to cover the charges which the Postmaster-General estimates will accrue in respect of such articles during such period as he may determine; provided that the amount so deposited shall not be less than ten shillings.

(d) The appropriate postage rates and supplementary charges as prescribed in the Schedule appended hereto shall be payable by the licensee.

(e) In all other respects the cards, envelopes, folders or portions of reply cards shall be subject to the general postal regulations.

(f) The licence may be revoked by the Postmaster-General by notice in writing of such a period as may have been determined by the Postmaster-General for the purposes of paragraph (c) hereof; provided that if the licensee fails to comply with any of the conditions of the licence, it may be revoked forthwith.

SCHEDULE.

In respect of postal articles delivered to the licensee under the provisions of the above regulation: ½d. per article, in addition to the prescribed postage rate.

Figure 1. High Commissioner's Notice, No. 98 of 1934, outlining business reply cards and envelopes regulations⁽²⁾

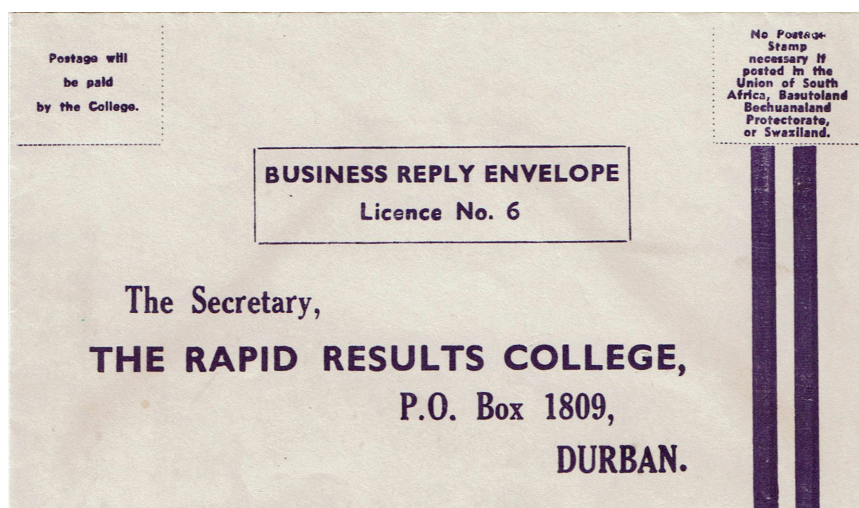


Figure 2. Business reply card from The Rapid Results College, Durban, South Africa

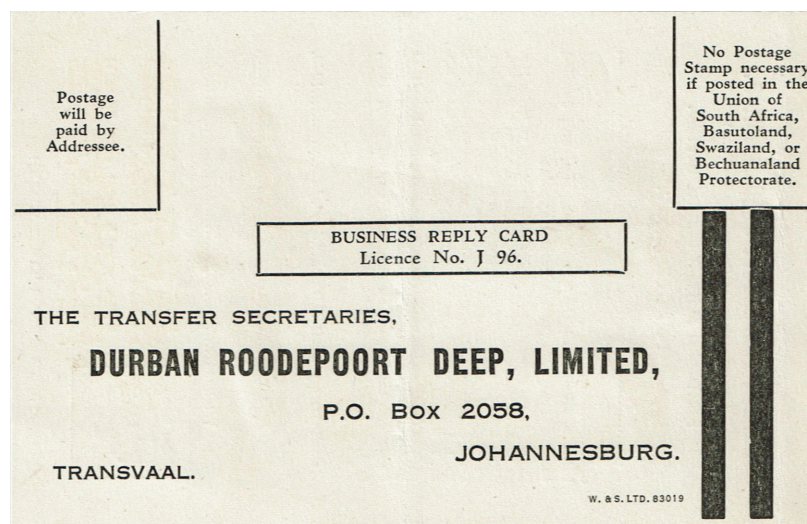


Figure 3. Business reply card from The Rapid Results College, Durban, South Africa

of business reply mail and to allow the Post Office to collect postage in cash from licensed entities receiving unpaid mail at any time. The text of this section is virtually identical to section 13 in the South Africa Act to consolidate the laws relating to the Post Office and matters incidental thereto, No. 44 of 1958.⁽⁵⁾

Section 8 of Botswana's Post Office (Postal and Franking) Regulations of 1980⁽⁶⁾ enables licences to be issued for use of a reply "post-card, envelope or folder" provided that the posted item conforms to specifications established by the Post Office and that the licensee deposit funds with the Post Office to cover the charges that will accrue.

While the Act and Regulations of 1980⁽⁷⁾ enable the post Office to offer the business reply service, charges for the service do not appear to have been established until the amendment of the regulations in 1986,⁽⁸⁾ which set the rate for "a postal item delivery to the licensee in accordance with the provisions of the business reply service (Reg. 8 (1))" at 3 thebe plus the postage.

Based on a review of earlier postal regulations for Botswana, it appears that business reply mail or a similar service may have been in place in the independent country prior to the 1980's. Item 1 under the Summary of Miscellaneous Charges in the Post Office (Postage, Telegraph and Miscellaneous Charges)

Regulations of 1971 states, "In respect of postal articles delivered to the licensee under the provision of regulation 47, 1c per article [*will be charged*] in addition to the prescribed postage rate."⁽⁹⁾ Unfortunately, regulations related to the Botswana postal system prior to 1971 have not been found by the author and therefore the service described in regulation 47 is unknown at this time. Note that the charge described is denominated in cents as Botswana had not changed its currency to Pula and thebe yet and was still using South African Rand and cents.

While the use of business reply mail has been enabled in Botswana / Bechuanaland for over 90 years, it does not appear that any licences were issued in the country until the year 2000 (see Table 1) when BotswanaPost introduced two new bulk mailing services for business customers, Permit Mail (see articles in Forerunners issue 102, January-April 2022) and Business Reply Mail. Information on Permit Mail can be found in Forerunners issue 102, January-April 2022 and issue 113, September-December 2025.

Business reply mail appears to have been relatively rapidly adopted (Table 1), with nine licenses issued in the first year and a further sixteen issued from 2001 to 2003. Twenty of the licenses were issued to businesses in the capital city, Gaborone or its

immediately adjacent communities, two to Tlokweng, which received its own license prefix (TKG) and one to Phakalane, which used a Gaborone prefix (GB). One license each was issued in Kanye (prefix KYE) and Serowe (prefix SRW). BotswanaPost provided itself with a license in December 1999.

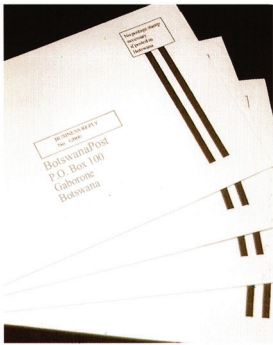
Figure 4 shows a copy of a hardcopy advertising pamphlet that BotswanaPost produced around the year 2009. The pamphlet describes the advantages of using business reply mail, how to apply for a business reply number, conditions of use and design requirements for the mailing piece. In the section on how to apply, instruction is given to “Use the specimen enclosed to design a Business Reply Envelope or Card.” However, no such specimen was attached to the pamphlet, rather instructions are given at the end of the pamphlet. In 2016, the official BotswanaPost webpage still advertised the business reply service. No examples of Botswana-specific Business Reply Mail have been seen by the author. In April 2025, no mention of the service was found on the organization’s website. A page entitled Mail,⁽¹⁰⁾ which lists various services including bulk mail, hybrid mail, franked

mail, registered mail, and ordinary mail, makes no mention of business reply mail, so the current status of this service is unknown.

A 2017 Facebook post from Business ideas in Botswana mentions, under the heading “FreePost”, that the parastatal Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency provides a business Reply Service licence number of 1102.⁽¹¹⁾ On 28 April 2025, the Agency’s Contact Us webpage still mentions this service.⁽¹²⁾ The physical address for the organization is the same as that of Tip-Offs Anonymous Botswana which, as shown in Figure 4, was granted business reply license number GB021 in August 2002. While Botswana Post provide no description of FreePost on their website, the South African Post office states that organizations may “Advertise a specified Freepost address and [Business Reply Service] number to which clients may write (no postage stamp required)”.⁽¹³⁾

Business Reply

The easy way to increase your customer response!



- Cost effective
- Flexible
- Customer friendly

BotswanaPost 

We will deliver

Figure 4. Business Reply advertising pamphlet from BotswanaPost from approximately 2009

Business Reply increases the likelihood your customers will respond to you because your customers do not pay for postage or the envelope. You can include Business Reply cards or envelopes along with questionnaires, statements, invoices or any item that needs to be returned to your company.

Use Business Reply!

- Business Reply **increases customer response** - it's easier for your customers and responding does not cost them money.
- Business Reply is **cost-effective** - you only pay for the responses you receive.
- Business Reply is **flexible** - there are no minimum quantities requirements.

Applying for a Business Reply number

- Use the specimen enclosed to design a Business Reply Envelope or Card.
- Complete the enclosed application form and send it together with the specimen to us.
- We will notify you of your Business Reply number within 24 hours.

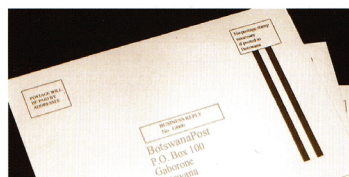
Business Reply Conditions

- The Business Reply service is available in Botswana only.
- Only cards and envelopes are accepted.
- Your Business Reply number, company name and postal address must be printed on all Business Reply items.
- You keep your Business Reply number until you or BotswanaPost cancel it.
- Business Reply responses must be addressed to a private box or bag and not to a street address.

- When you receive Business Reply responses, an invoice will be placed in your PO box or Private bag telling you how many responses you have received and how much you must pay. Payment may be made over the counter or, if you are a credit customer, the charge will be added to your invoice.
- You will be charged the postage rate equivalent to the price of mailing the item.
- If you contravene any of the conditions laid down, BotswanaPost may cancel your number at any time. We will attempt to contact you first.

Envelope/Card Design

- The address side of the envelope or card must conform to the design enclosed. This ensures the items will be accepted and processed with no stamps required.
 - The minimum and recommended dimensions are:
- | Item | Minimum size | Recommended size |
|-----------|--------------|------------------|
| Cards | 90mm x 140mm | 120mm x 235mm |
| Envelopes | 90mm x 140mm | 120mm x 235mm |
- The contents of the envelope must be printed material with a maximum weight not exceeding 1kg.



If you have any inquiries about this service please phone us toll free on 0 800 33 55 77

BotswanaPost 

We will deliver

Botswana Postal Services trading as BotswanaPost • P.O. Box 100 • Gaborone • Botswana
Tel: (+267) 580830 • Fax: (+267) 313599

Table 1. List of Business Reply licences issued in Botswana until mid-2004

Company Name	Company Address	Business
Engen Botswana		GB 001
Car Rentals Botswana	PO Box 790, Gaborone	GB 002
C.E.P. Consultants	Private Bag BR293, Gaborone	GB 003
National Development Bank	PO Box 225, Gaborone	GB 004
Botswana Savings Bank	PO Box 1150, Gaborone	GB 005
Botsalo Books	PO Box 1532, Gaborone	GB 006
Delivery Solutions	Private Bag 116, Gaborone	GB 007
Elwood Investment Services		GB 008
BotswanaPost		GB 009
AA Botswana (Pty) Ltd	PO Box 404239, Gaborone	GB 010
Barclays Bank	PO Box 478, Gaborone	GB 011
Botswana Telecomms	PO Box 700, Gaborone	GB 012
Vista Cellular	Private Bag BO 64, Gaborone	GB 013
Mascom Wireless	Private Bag BO 298, Gaborone	GB 014
AA Botswana (Pty) Ltd	PO Box 404239, Gaborone	GB 015
Capital Securities	Private Bag 173, Gaborone	GB016
Botswana Insurance Fund Management	Private Bag BR 185, Gaborone	GB 017
Retail Group-Deboneers	PO Box 45063, Riverwalk	GB018
Botswana Gurdian & Sun	Private Bag 153, Gaborone	GB019
Penrich Employee Benefits (Pty) Ltd	PO Box 47144, Phakalane	GB020
Tip-Offs Anonymous Botswana	PO Box 448, Gaborone	GB021
MakAnderson	PO Box M1726, Kanye	KYE 001
Ntio Ya Efangele	PO Box 12, Serowe	SRW 001
The Botswana Heritage	PO Box 301226, Tlokweng	TKG 001
Fre-Lar Gardens Centre		TKG 002

End Notes

1. <https://postalpro.usps.com/brm> retrieved on 28 April 2025.
2. <https://botswanalaws.com/Bechuanaland/Subsidiary/193HIGH%20COMMISSIONER'S%20NOTICE,%20NO.%2098%20OF%201934.pdf> (retrieved on 23 May 2021).
3. <https://southafricanphilatelyclub.com/forum/topic/business-reply-mail#postid-2471> (retrieved on 28 April 2025).
4. <https://southafricanphilatelyclub.com/forum/topic/business-reply-mail#postid-2471> retrieved on 28 April 2025.
5. <https://postalhistory.ca/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Botswana-Legislation/1980-Botswana-Post-Office-Act.pdf> accessed on 28 July 2026.
6. <https://commons.laws.africa/akn/za/act/1958/44/media/publication/za-act-1958-44-publication-document.pdf> (accessed on 27 April 2025).
7. <https://botswanalaws.com/consolidated-statutes/subsidiary-legislation/botswana-postal-services-subsidiary-legislation-previously-post-office> (accessed on 27 April 2025).
8. [https://botswanalaws.com/StatutesActpdf/1986Subsidiarypdf/POST%20OFFICE%20\(POSTAGE%20AND%20MISCELLANEOUS%20CHARGES\)%20\(AMENDMENT\)%20REGULATIONS,%20S.I.NO.%2031%20OF%201986.pdf](https://botswanalaws.com/StatutesActpdf/1986Subsidiarypdf/POST%20OFFICE%20(POSTAGE%20AND%20MISCELLANEOUS%20CHARGES)%20(AMENDMENT)%20REGULATIONS,%20S.I.NO.%2031%20OF%201986.pdf) (accessed on 28 April 2025).
9. POST OFFICE (POSTAGE, TELEGRAPH AND MISCELLANEOUS CHARGES) REGULATIONS, S. I. NO. 55 OF 1971.pdf (accessed on 28 April 2025).
10. <https://botswanapost.post/mail> accessed on 28 April 2025.
11. <https://www.facebook.com/businessideasbotswana/posts/9-institutions-offering-business-funding-support-for-botswana-youth/citizen-entr/865543756939433/> (accessed on 28 April 2025).
12. <https://www.ceda.co.bw/contact-us> (accessed on 28 April 2025).
13. <https://www.postoffice.co.za/business/businessreplyservice.html> (accessed on 28 April 2025).





ISSN 1076-2612

*****FORERUNNERS

JOURNAL OF THE PHILATELIC SOCIETY FOR GREATER SOUTHERN AFRICA

Affiliated with the American Philatelic Society and the Philatelic Federation of South Africa

Volume XXXIX, Number 2, Whole Number 115

May-August 2026



Copperplate engraved early sketch map of Cape Bay and Good Hope.
Published around 1754 in Paris.

Highlights

Business Reply Mail
Sundays Mornings
Internal SAR/SAS Mail
Botswana Postmarks
Measuring Postmarks

Vermeil at Boston 2026