Comparison of characteristics and prices for certain
Neopost and AMS franking machines

The tables below compare the prices and characteristics of certain Neopost and AMS machines, drawing on the descriptions in *What to Buy for Business* magazine's annual review of franking machines in 1998, 2000 and 2001. The choice of machines to compare is subjective: we have chosen comparisons where the functionality of the machines appears to be similar in most important respects, although differences may exist between them, including aspects not reflected in these tables.

TABLE 1 **Comparison 1998**						
Segment	Low end	Low end	Low end	Low end	Mid range	Mid to high range
	Ascom	**Neopost**	**Ascom**	**Neopost**	**Ascom**	**Neopost**
Characteristics	*SMILE*	*SM22-50/SM22-60*	*120/304*	*5450*	*220/304*	*8550/8860*
Maximum cycle speed	2,400	2,100	3,600	3,600	7,200	6,000
List price	£1,254	£1,295	£1,581	£1,955	£3,030	£3,750
Printer type	Ink cartridge	Thermal transfer	Ink cartridge	Ink cartridge	Ink cartridge	Ink cartridge
Recommended monthly usage	Up to 1,500	2,000	1,500–4,000	2,000	4,000	20,000
PC interface	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Service: inspection only	£38.40	£70	£56	£70	£56	£80
Service: comprehensive	£93.30	£139	£120	£147.50	£170	£258.50
Comment	Automatic date change available	No postal scale interface	2 separate units. The 120—the base. The 304—the attachable electronic meter	No postal scale interface	Can link with folders & inserters	No postal scale interface
	Cost centre accounting available	Cost centre accounting available	Cost centre accounting and PC interface		Relatively high 12mm maximum thickness	Only 6mm maximum thickness
What To Buy for Business ratings	WTB Good Value	WTB Worth A Look	WTB Good Value	WTB Good Value	WTB BEST BUY for middle range	Not on WTB recommended shortlist for this range
and comments	High end features on a low end machine	Speed is a little slow	Sturdy, no frills			

Segment	Mid to high end	Mid to high end	Mid to high end	High end	High end
Characteristics	**Ascom** *337/324*	**Neopost** *SM75-60*	**Neopost** *SM78-50/-60*	**Ascom** *335 (Super Heavy Duty)*	**Neopost** *SM94-50/-60*
Maximum cycle speed	10,000	10,000	10,000	12,000	12,000
List price	£5,486	£6,040	£7,125	£9,064	£9,845
Printer type	Ink cartridge	Ink cartridge	Ink cartridge	Ink cartridge	Ink cartridge
Recommended monthly usage	4,000+	70,000	70,000	4,000+	70,000
PC interface	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service: inspection only	£56	£TBA	£95	£56	£95
Service: comprehensive	£249.50	£TBA	£603	£464	£789.50
Comment	The automatic feeder is optional 12mm envelope thickness	Includes automatic envelope feeder 10mm envelope thickness	Unlike the previous two models there is no automatic date change 9mm envelope thickness	There is no automatic date change "Disappointing" 10mm thickness	Automatic feeder and sealer come as standard 12.7mm envelope thickness
What To Buy for Business ratings and comments	WTB Worth A Look for this range	WTB Worth A Look for this range	WTB Worth A Look for this range	Not recommended for this range	WTB Good Value

What To Buy for Business ratings:

Best Buy: The machines which are the most attractive to potential purchasers, with good all round features and performance at a competitive price

Good Value: Machines that don't quite make the top rank. Good value for money for the level of features that they have.

Worth A Look: These machines are well above average, but they are not outstanding. Might be good for specialist needs.

Worth Watching: These are new machines usually not yet launched, but worth thinking about. The machine is a potential award winner.

Source: What to Buy for Business.

TABLE 2 **Comparison 2000**						
Segment	Low end	Low end	Low end	Low end	Mid range	Mid to high range
	Ascom	*Neopost*	*Ascom*	*Neopost*	*Ascom*	*Neopost*
Characteristics	*SMILE*	*SM22*	*120/304*	*5460*	*220/304*	*IJ65*
Maximum cycle speed	2,400	2,100	3,600	3,600	7,200	8,100
List price	£1,318	£1,495	£1,661	£2,158	£3,183	£3,500
Printer type	Microline 280 Impact printer	Thermal transfer	Microline 280	Ink cartridge	Microline 280	Inkjet cartridge
Recommended monthly usage	Up to 1,500	2,000	1,500 - 4,000	2,000	4,000	20,000
PC interface	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Service: inspection only	£40.40	£75	£59.10	£75	£59.10	£86
Service: comprehensive	£98.50	£148	£142.20	£157	£193.30	£287
Comment:	'Slightly disappointing'	Has postal interface	2 separate units. The 120—the base. The 304—the attachable electronic meter	No postal interface	Recommended usage is low	Has postal interface
	It doesn't offer any slogan blocks as standard	Offers 1 free slogan block	1 slogan block is included with the price	1 slogan block as standard	Can link with folders & inserters	Maximum cycle speed is above average for this range
	Low envelope thickness of 6.35mm	Slow cycle speed, 6mm envelope thickness	Cost centre accounting and PC interface	No automatic date change	Relatively high 12mm maximum thickness	'Generous' 16mm max thickness
What To Buy for Business ratings and comments	*WTB Worth A Look Impact printer makes it noisy.	Not recommended for this range Lacks style	Not recommended for this range Sturdy, no frills	Not recommended for this range 'A basic franker', a bit pricey	WTB GOOD VALUE for middle range Automatic envelope feeder, sealer and stacker—on offer	BEST BUY for this range Exciting, new machine

Segment	Mid to high end	Mid to high end	Mid to high end	High end	High end
Characteristics	**Ascom** *320/324*	**Neopost** *SM75*	**Ascom** *337/324*	**Ascom** *335 SHD*	**Neopost** *SM95*
Maximum cycle speed	10,000	10,000	10,000	12,000	14,400
List price	£4,783	£5,573	£7,125	£9,523	£9,023
Printer type	Microline 280	Ink roller	Integral/Microline	Microline 280	Ink roller
Recommended monthly usage	4,000+	40,000	4,000+	4,000+	100,000
PC interface	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service: inspection only	£59.10	£101	£59.10	£55.10	£101
Service: comprehensive	£278.80	£346	£316	£515.10	£587
Comment	Options: feeder, sealer, stacker Recommended usage: low 12mm maximum envelope thickness	Includes automatic envelope feeder Too many features are not standard, they are optional 10mm maximum thickness: adequate	Automatic date change available Recommended usage: low 12mm envelope thickness	Automatic feeder, sealer come as standard Recommended usage: low 'Disappointing' 10mm envelope thickness	Automatic date change 14,400 cycle speed is 'super fast' 'Generous' 16mm thickness
What To Buy for Business ratings and comments	WTB GOOD VALUE Rugged, not stylish	WTB Worth A Look for this range Good all round modular machine	WTB Worth A Look for this range Modularity is its strong point	WTB Good Value Solid work	BEST BUY for this range Modularity is its strongest point

What To Buy for Business ratings:

Best Buy: The machines which are the most attractive to potential purchasers, with good all round features and performance at a competitive price

Good Value: Machines that don't quite make the top rank. Good value for money for the level of features that they have.

Worth A Look: These machines are well above average, but they are not outstanding. Might be good for specialist needs.

Worth Watching: These are new machines usually not yet launched, but worth thinking about. The machine is a potential award winner.

  Source: What to Buy for Business.

TABLE 3 **Comparison 2001**						
Segment	Mid range	Mid range	Mid to high end	Mid to high end	High end	High end
	Ascom	**Neopost**	**Ascom**	**Neopost**	**Ascom**	**Neopost**
Characteristics	120/304	5460	320/324	SM75	AUTOMAIL	SM85
Maximum cycle speed	3,600	3,600	10,000	10,000	12,000	12,000
List price	£1,710	£2,265	£4,926	£5,573	£15,669	£7,528
Printer type	Impact	Ink-jet	Impact	Ink roller	Impact	Ink roller
Recommended monthly usage	2,500–4,000	2,000	4,000+	40,000	100,000	40,000
PC interface	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Optional	Yes
Service: inspection only	£62.80	£79	£62.80	£106	£62.80	£106
Service: comprehensive	£151.00	£164	£296	£363	£947.00	£506
Comment	Postal scales interface Impact printer makes noise 6.5mm maximum thickness—basic	No postal interface Cycle speed: basic	Options: feeder, sealer, stacker Recommended usage: low 12mm max envelope thickness	Includes automatic envelope feeder Too many features are not standard, they are optional 10mm maximum thickness: adequate	Automatic bar code reader, feeder, sealer are integrated Same speed as 335 SHD 'Disappointing' 10mm envelope thickness	With auxiliary printer Postal scales interface Feature set: basic—hard to compare to AutoMail
What To Buy for Business ratings and comments	Not recommended	Not recommended for this range 'Uninspiring'	Not recommended for this range	Not recommended for this range Lack of standard features	Worth A Look But PB Paragon better	GOOD VALUE

What To Buy for Business ratings:
Best Buy: The machines which are the most attractive to potential purchasers, with good all round features and performance at a competitive price
Good Value: Machines that don't quite make the top rank. Good value for money for the level of features that they have.
Worth A Look: These machines are well above average, but they are not outstanding. Might be good for specialist needs.
Worth Watching: These are new machines usually not yet launched, but worth thinking about. The machine is a potential award winner.

Source: What to Buy for Business.