



Postcode News 102

Winter Q.1/21

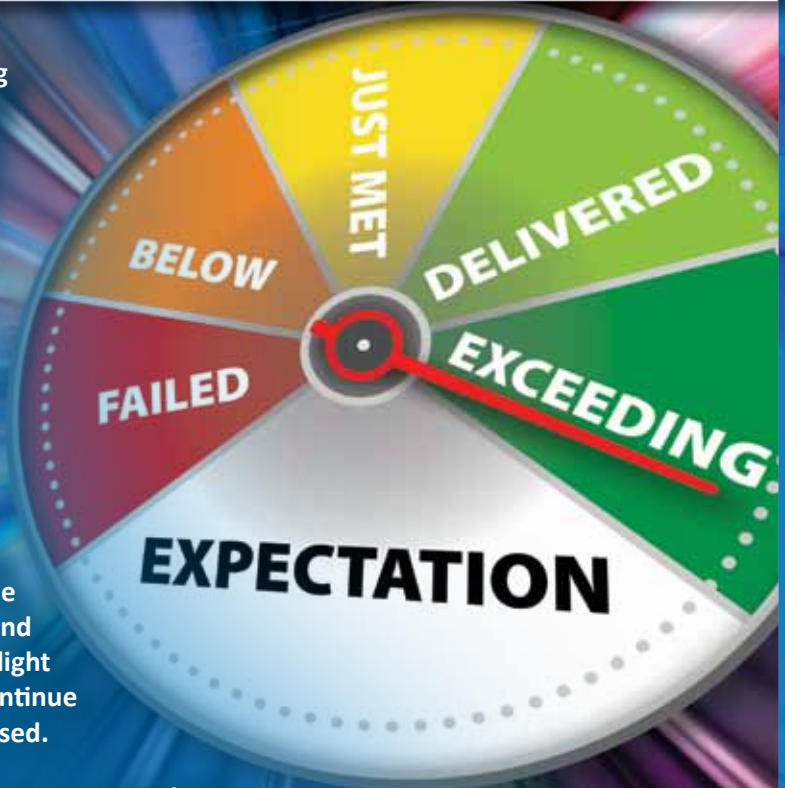
EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Key to the growth of any business is managing expectations, particularly the expectations of customers. This can be quite challenging, although it is vital to understand what customers expect to improve decision-making and leave customers happy.

Axminster Tools had a requirement to cleanse and classify almost one million customer records. Read how AFD's data solutions have enabled them to minimise returns from expensive catalogue mailings, better understand their existing customers and identify and reach new ones.

Current circumstances have prevented us from holding our annual charity event, but the increased need made us more determined than ever to respond by going beyond expectations and increasing our donations. We highlight the incredible work a couple of the chosen charities continue to do and how the staff-nominated donations will be used.

Usually, our staff Hotspot features a member of the team at AFD, what they contribute in their role, and the number of years they have contributed to our 450 years' combined experience. In this issue we feature somebody who hasn't been with us very long, and who's not likely to stay with us much longer – but we still have great expectations for her... Read on and find out more!



THE BEST TOOLS FOR THE JOB

AXMINSTER TOOLS

We share your passion.

Founded in 1972, Axminster Tools are a family-run business that pride themselves on their strong customer service values. With eight stores across the UK, a formidable online presence and a wholesale arm that also sells even to competitors, Axminster are recognised as one of the major leaders in the tools and machinery market. AFD Software was chosen as a partner in data quality to overcome three major challenges: cleanse almost one million customer addresses; classify each customer as business or consumer; and



improve address validation at the point of entry.

A Refreshing Change – but not as expected

Traditionally a catalogue business, a few years ago Axminster made the huge decision to pull the plug on their six-hundred-page bi-annual catalogue, so that they could focus on their online business. However, contrary to expectation, customer feedback soon told them that their customers wanted the catalogue back!

Axminster knew that it would not be sensible to just do what they had done before with the catalogue, which had felt wasteful and led to the original decision to withdraw it. We spoke to Damion Norcombe, Chief Information Officer at Axminster, to understand how important clean data would be in reducing wasted cost, maximising delivery success, and driving new sales from the re-launched catalogue: “We knew we needed to cleanse our customer

address data before relaunching the catalogue. Previously, staff would have had to sort through many large bags of returned catalogues numbering in the thousands that hadn’t reached their intended destination - costing us valuable staff time. A returned catalogue is not only a waste of printing and postage cost, there is an environmental cost and an opportunity cost. For every returned catalogue, a customer has missed vital communication and the business has missed a sales opportunity.”

AFD Refiner was used to cleanse and reformat Axminster’s customer address database (almost one million records) against the Royal Mail Postcode Address File.



www.afd.co.uk/refiner

“There is a can-do attitude that we get with everyone at AFD, nothing is an issue, promises are kept, and this is important from a software partner - a refreshing change.”

After cleansing, Damion was able to report that: “From a mailing of 40,000 catalogues to customers that had been active in the last 12 months we have had only 250 returns: this is a sharp decline in returns and a clear win following the data cleanse. We now have confidence that our customers’ address data is accurate.”

Following the success of the cleansing project, Damion describes what’s next: “The plans around the data and catalogue is to analyse the AFD Censation data (Geodemographic Classification System) of customers that have purchased after receiving the catalogue, and add more customers into future mailings that match the same customer profile.”

Know Your Customer

Incorrectly classifying data can lead to missed opportunities, inappropriate levels of service and customer frustration. Charlie Cross, Chief Sales Manager at Axminster, explains the complex problem of understanding customers: “Because our customer base is diverse and made up from consumers as well as businesses,

understanding whether a customer is a DIY enthusiast buying tools for a new project or a flooring contractor living at their registered business address is critical in how we manage them.

Business data including; turnover, number of staff and sector from AFD Names & Numbers has enabled us to quickly and correctly classify our customers. We now know who our customers are and can ensure that they receive the correct levels of service.”

How many Steves?

Axminster have used AFD Names & Numbers in a novel way in their customer classification process. Charlie continues: “Through the classification process, we have been able to build customer personae.



For example, we've called one persona 'Steve' - it includes all furniture-makers with a specific turnover range and number of employees. We can then understand how many 'Steves' are in the database, what they buy and their preferred sales channel (online, in store or over the phone). Looking ahead to our plans for growth, business data from AFD will be used to understand our market share and find more customers that match the same personae as our 'ideal customers'."

An Automatic Upgrade

When Axminster used a previous supplier of address validation, key problems were identified around data updates, as Damion recalls: "Before partnering with AFD for address validation instore and online, applying essential data updates was a laborious manual job for each of our eight stores



and the website. Each file would be a large download and then after that was complete, the server would need updating for the changes to take effect online. This was not only time-consuming but there were instances when during the update process, there would be an error or an interruption and the address validation would not work. This led to either our sales processes slowing down, or not having any validations in place which then led to address errors and potentially delivery failure, completely obviating the benefits of having invested in address validation in the first place. Following the upgrade to AFD, this process is completely automated - saving us valuable man hours and removing the risk of the previous errors encountered."

As well as updates now being automatic, Axminster were pleased to find that the data they receive from AFD is also better than their previous supplier. Damion continues: "AFD's business data is more up-to-date,

especially useful when we have a clear requirement to understand our customers and provide the correct level of service to them."

The definition of "good"

Partnering with a new supplier can often cause complications, but Axminster found working with AFD to be a very straightforward and easy process. Damion gives his recommendation: "Any questions that have come up have been answered and solved straightaway, the solutions run themselves and we are pleased with the products and services we have had so far.

There is a can-do attitude that we get with everyone at AFD, nothing is an issue, promises are kept, and this is important from a software partner - a refreshing change."

Charlie adds: "We deal with lots of suppliers and partners and we know what good looks like, and we also know what bad looks like. As a supplier, AFD Software is a clear example of what good looks like as a partner."

For over 37 years AFD Software has helped thousands of organisations get data right. To understand how your organisation could benefit from fast, accurate and clean data and to experience for yourself what "good" looks like, contact Joel Miller on 01624 811711 or email postcode@afd.co.uk



THE HIGHLIGHT OF A DIFFICULT YEAR – AFD CHARITY DONATIONS 2020

Over recent months Charities have had to respond to some incredibly difficult circumstances, yet themselves have been deeply impacted by restrictions on fund-raising events, speaking opportunities at clubs and churches, and the loss of financial and volunteer resources. AFD wanted to ensure we could do even more in providing support to those who need it most during these difficult times.

Every year, the entire team of staff each have the opportunity to nominate a charity of their choice to receive a donation from AFD Software. It is a huge motivation for all staff to know that the work they do in their respective roles is helping to relieve the suffering of those in need. Our directors also nominate a range of organisations to receive support from the business.

In 2019 we celebrated donations totalling around £1,000,000 to over 70 charities.

In 2020 around 80 charities received donations totalling over £1,500,000 – part of our response to the increased level of need.

A couple of the charities using AFD's donations to make a difference during the pandemic can be found below.

COVID-19 changed all our lives in 2020 with more time spent at home, unable to visit families and friends. However, we are incredibly fortunate to live in a country where basic necessities and access to emergency healthcare has still been available to those in need.

Other parts of the world have not been so fortunate. Imagine the Kabubbu community

in Uganda where some lack the basic resources to live, or the means to make a living, regardless of a global pandemic. Add to their already desperate situation an invisible disease that thrives on poor hygiene, and it's impossible not to understand their plight. How do you choose between food or soap – which may save you from a fatal disease? The **Quicken Trust** aims to show the love of God in action to the Kabubbu community in



Quicken Trust

Uganda by providing the community with the resources they lack, assisting them in acquiring skills and training to continue working towards self-sustainability. AFD's donation to the Quicken Trust's COVID-19 appeal provided 2 deliveries of 850 huge bars of soap which were distributed to households, to enable regular handwashing as a deterrent against the virus. 2 acres of land and maize flour were also purchased with the donation, to help prevent hunger in the community and further the work towards self-sustainability.

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) uses light aircraft to provide flights for 2,000 aid, development and Christian mission

organisations, enabling them to reach remote and isolated communities across the developing world with help, hope and healing.

Help, hope and healing were already in short supply in isolated communities across the developing world prior to COVID-19. In the Tibetsti Mountains, the delivery of oxygen masks and temperature devices were required to effectively screen and treat patients with the disease. One of Mission Aviation Fellowship's (MAF) light aircraft was able to make the lifechanging delivery to this remote community in Chad. AFD's donation is helping MAF worldwide to keep the aircraft and personnel which deliver such vital services ready and able to respond to the impact of COVID-19 in the developing world – in addition to the usual needs of isolated communities for basic supplies and emergency medical evacuations.



Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF)

You can read about the incredible work of all the charities supported in 2020 and how the donations from AFD will help them continue to relieve suffering at www.afd.co.uk/charity

Between October and December 2020 there were significant updates to data on The Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF). These included 18 new localities; 10,563 new postcodes; 125,650 new delivery points and 21,161 delivery point changes.

Postcode	Double Dependent Locality	Dependent Locality	Post Town
BA6 8		WICK	GLASTONBURY
BD24 9		SOWARTH INDUSTRIAL ESTATE	SETTLE
BS40 9	FELTON COMMON	FELTON	BRISTOL
CB7 7		ISLEHAM	ELY
CV37 5		SHACKLETON VILLAGE	STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
DH6 5	INTEGRA 61 NORTH	BOWBURN	DURHAM
EX2 0		ALPHINGTON	EXETER
EX2 0		MATFORD	EXETER
GL3 5		BROCKWORTH	GLOUCESTER
GL7 6	SIDDINGTON PARK	SIDDINGTON	CIRENCESTER
LU5 7		HOUGHTON REGIS	DUNSTABLE
NN15 4		BARTON SEAGRAVE	KETTERING
NP19 4		ST. MODWEN PARK	NEWPORT
PE11 1		PINCHBECK	SPALDING
PE32 1	TOWER END	MIDDLETON	KING'S LYNN
PE32 2		WEST ACRE	KING'S LYNN
TQ7 3		SOUTH MILTON SANDS	KINGSBRIDGE
WS14 9		WHITTINGTON HEATH	LICHFIELD

The most up-to-date PAF data is available now in our latest Q.1/21 update. You can order updates for any AFD Software solution by calling 01624 811711 or email postcode@afd.co.uk



Hotspot - Emily Gray Research & Development Intern.

Keen to gain real work experience before attending university, Emily met AFD's General Manager, Duncan McLeod through the charity Career Ready. When she enquired about a job at AFD, Duncan explains: "As a technology company I know we need to invest our time and energy into building a workforce of the very best talent. Emily's CV was very impressive and we were

pleased to help her with real-world experience in a leading technology company. Emily has exceeded our expectations by not only learning and acquiring new skills, but using them to deliver tangible results to benefit the organisation."

During the internship, Emily tells us she has been able to use technologies not taught in school, such as Git and Docker, as well as familiarise herself with the world of web development. With no previous knowledge, Emily was able to quickly learn HTML, JavaScript, and CSS as part of a project to index our Postcode News archive for the website.

A big fan of the outdoors, Emily loves to walk, and volunteers with the Woodland Trust, which gets her out planting trees every Sunday, as well as maintaining the island's forests and protecting the native trees. When she finds a moment to rest, Emily likes to sink into a good book. She'll give any genre a chance but will always find herself going back to Harry Potter.

Originally born in the UK but moving to Canada at a young age, Emily moved to the Isle of Man when she was 14. Her plan now is to return to the UK to study philosophy and maths at university. Some might wonder what links the two subjects, but Emily informs us that they are united by logic – "maths is just philosophy with symbols".

When asked how the internship will benefit her future studies and career, Emily answers: "I have been able to increase my knowledge base and use it outside of theory. The experience has gone beyond my expectations, the opportunity to work on real projects has been highly valuable and puts me in a much better position for employment in the future."

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