Growth and Stability

Often unseen, the consequences of inaccurate contact data hinder growth, undermine customer service, cause confusion through undelivered communication, damage reputation and waste valuable resources.

Talking directly and helping thousands of organisations for more than 40 years, we have learned that accurate contact data underpins stable growth, consistent service, and effective communication.

Our mission is to deliver contact data accuracy – by validating name, address, email, phone, and bank data at lightning speed, wherever they are entered. Why? So that you can grow with stability.

In this edition of Postcode News, read why nationwide retailer **Beaverbrooks** chose AFD Software as their partners in address and data quality. Also, understand how constant investment in our hosted services infrastructure has produced over two years of 100% uptime: accommodating growing numbers and content of data records, the Postcode People can offer the stability you require!

Read this and more inside.

CHANGE! WHY, WHAT, HOW?

Beaverbrooks is a thriving, multi-channel retail jewellery business with over 1,200 colleagues and 80 stores nationwide. With more than a century of expertise helping customers find the right diamonds, jewellery and watches, Beaverbrooks have applied the best operational technology to support customer retention and growth in this competitive space. In 2021/2022 Beaverbrooks had their most successful year ever, with over £200 million in turnover.

Head of IT, Patrick Walker, and IT Systems Development Manager, Vicki Olthoff, have 50 years of combined experience implementing and maintaining multi-channel retail systems. They wanted to bring a new level of consistency, automation and reliability to customer and prospect data validation, and after conducting a careful review of their needs and the marketplace, they made the upgrade to AFD Software. We wanted to find out how Patrick and Vicki took the selection decision and understand the immediate and expected business impacts.

WHAT DID BEAVERBROOKS WANT?

Patrick says: "From one company we sought five things: 1. A single source solution covering off fast, accurate, consistent contact data entry across all channels. 2. A reliable service that removed anxiety. 3. A process for complete data cleansing including suppressions which would show the highest levels of diligence in the GDPR data accuracy principle. 4. A combination of the highest percentage of accurate automated data cleansing, combined with the fastest processing rates. 5. To put in a new solution and forget it – because it just works."

ASSESSING AFD SOFTWARE – BEFORE

Even with strong commercial, technical, and functional reasons to change their address validation and data cleansing supplier – Beaverbrooks were still keen to minimise risk. Their due diligence on AFD included reference sites, product testing, integration evaluation, assessment of technical skills and evaluation of AFD Software as a company.

AND AFTER - HOW IS THE ROLL-OUT GOING?

Vicki reports: "For the past three years we've had AFD Software in action on our web platform for validating and speeding up contact data entered by customers. It is also being used by staff in our stores as part of our bespoke Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) and we're integrating it into our Order Management System (OMS) and our Customer Data Platform (CDP)."

MANY CHANNELS – ONE SOLUTION

Thousands of customers place orders each week in Beaverbrooks stores, on the website, by post, by phone and via partners such as Next and Shop Direct. This complex operation is supported by a variety of systems including EPOS, Web, Mail Order, OMS and CDP which work together as a single ecosystem.

Vicki continues: "When customer data is received from so many different channels it is important that the validation sources are from a single, complete, and accurate source. Whatever the channel used, by colleagues or customers, we want a consistent contact data entry experience. This was another key consideration in choosing AFD. When the rollout is complete, all these systems will have a touchpoint back onto the AFD solutions."

ACCURACY AND GDPR COMPLIANCE

Beyond this, Beaverbrooks is conscious of its GDPR responsibilities and recognise that customer data degrades over time. To help keep contact data accurate Beaverbrooks also switched to AFD Software to provide services to cleanse address data and detect customers who have moved or are now deceased.

WANT SUCCESS? FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER

Patrick adds: "Because the customer is at the forefront of everything we do, we want that journey, that

WWW.AFD.CO.UK/ADDRESS-LOOKUP

customer experience, to be the best it can be. AFD is an essential part of delivering minimum friction and maximum accuracy at crucial parts in that journey.

This has tangible impacts across the business. Purchases are more likely, deliveries go to the right place, our communications arrive – the result is happy customers and increased internal efficiency.

THE PROOF IS IN THE INCREASE.

One error in an email address makes it undeliverable – and mistakes in data entry are easy in a busy store.

Vicki explains: "Email is an important way to engage with customers and to encourage them to return to our stores. This relies on the accuracy of the email addresses recorded by customers and colleagues. To maximise accuracy, we now use the AFD live email validation service. The instant check enables immediate correction of any mistakes. This ensures our communications are deliverable from the outset.

Increasing deliverability, whether by post or email, means that our communications get to more people who get more opportunities to come into our stores. It's a real win-win."

ALIGNMENT, FLEXIBILITY, CONFIDENCE

Patrick continues: "AFD is a great fit for us. We have found the Postocde People at AFD's technical and support skills and responsiveness to be both very helpful and very good. AFD solutions provide real flexibility of implementation from a unified service that works across all our systems and platforms. The options of on-site installation and hosted services build in a high level of resilience and stability. Our experience with AFD compared with others in this space is very positive: the solutions are very good to use, and we get a personal service. In fact, in terms of culture and philosophy and values we're very similar."

Vicki concludes: We're glad we did the due diligence on AFD Software – they passed the tests - and we are confident we took the right decision for the business – and we are already reaping rewards.

AFD Hosted Services 100% Uptime. Instant Performance, Rapidly Scalable – But How?

When you rely on Software as a Service (SaaS) you need confidence that the provider of that service is competent and can prove consistent availability and scalability. With thousands of organisations across the world relying on our services, we are continuously investing in our hosted infrastructure.

So how do we achieve 100% uptime - we've had no outages, no partial outages, no degraded performance - in two years? A few basics: stay humble, plan ahead, constantly monitor, keep building team skill and knowledge, implement the very best technologies and practices – invest in the right tools and rigorously test.

What are some of the practices that are delivering outstanding levels of uptime second by second, building to year by year?

Our network is optimised so that thousands of simultaneous requests for (say) address validation can be processed with users receiving immediate responses. This is called low latency.

When there are spikes and increases in demand for our services, we are ready to respond instantly with increased capacity. We achieve this by enabling our hosted services to automatically enlarge - which is known as lightweight virtualisation technology. These extra resources are deployed quickly, reliably, and consistently. We also anticipate that faults happen and use additional machines which allow connections to still be made available if another machine fails ("Quorum Nodes"), to improve resiliency and fault tolerance. AFD continues to invest heavily in technologies that deliver maximum speed, reliability, and availability.

100% UPTIME

While we have maintained a 100% uptime track record for the past two years, we understand that technology can sometimes be unpredictable, and unexpected challenges may arise. Do we want to maintain 100%? Yes! That's why our quest for excellence is never over - our dedicated teams will continue to use best practice, available technologies and ongoing testing to maintain the highest levels of service. In summary – we care, we invest, we want to be the best. Our goal is simple. Happy Customers.

AFD Data News   Q.3/23

Between April and June 2023 there were significant updates to data on PAF. These included 13 new localities; 7,333 new postcodes; 100,011 new delivery points and 18,537 delivery point changes.

Post-code	Double Dependent Locality	Dependent Locality	Post Town
CO4 7		BOXTED	COLCHESTER
DN5 9		SCAWTHORPE	DONCASTER
GL7 3		COLN WATERS	LECHLADE
IP5 4		MARTLESHAM HEATH	IPSWICH
KA11 2		MONTGOMERIE PARK	IRVINE
LS9 0		SKELTON GATE	LEEDS
MK45 3		WIXAMS	BEDFORD
NR22 6	WATERDEN	SOUTH CREAKE	WALSINGHAM
OX4 2		ARC OXFORD	OXFORD
PE7 7		YAXLEY	PETERBOROUGH
PH13 9	BENDOCHY	COUPAR ANGUS	BLAIRGOWRIE
WR2 6	OLDBURY	LOWER BROADHEATH	WORCESTER
YO18 7		PICKERING PARK	PICKERING

The most up-to-date PAF data is available now in our latest Q.3/23 update. You can order updates for any AFD Software solution by calling 01624 811711 or email postcode@afd.co.uk

Aifric O'Shea, *Web Developer*

Born in Dublin, Aifric's family moved to the Isle of Man when she was three, and aside from a few years studying English Language at the University of Huddersfield, Aifric has spent most of her life living there.

Aifric's career with AFD began as an IT Apprentice, which allowed her to explore roles in the Support, QA, and Operations departments. Long before the successful completion of the apprenticeship, Aifric had decided that Operations was the team and role she felt best suited to. Her first role in the Operations team once her apprenticeship was complete was Junior Web Developer, which has now led to taking full responsibility for the AFD Group's websites as Web Developer, playing an integral part in building the new AFD website at the end of 2021.

As a member of the Operations team, Aifric's roles also include keeping the AFD teams' computers, phones, and office infrastructure in peak working order. Aifric confirms: "Yes, restarting it typically *does* fix it!"

When asked what she most enjoys about her role, Aifric answers; "I'm a naturally curious person and being a Web Developer is a never-ending learning experience, so I thoroughly enjoy it. The place where we work is beautiful and helps satisfy my desire to be in nature while being office-based – especially when the weather is so nice (even sometimes when it's not!). I also appreciate the green initiatives that are in place at AFD that actively reduce our carbon footprint, as well as the generosity of those who run the company both to the team at AFD and those in less fortunate circumstances via charitable donations."

Outside of work, active pursuits keep Aifric busy; "I'm quite a sporty individual. I love hiking and cycling in my spare time, enjoy going to the gym and playing for a local football team. Learning the Spanish language is something else I'm putting time into, which will be incredibly useful when I hopefully travel through South America in the future."

Speaking of travel, Aifric's holiday recommendation is Canada; "I love exploring new towns/cities and doing all the touristy stuff, but I also love exploring new landscapes and climbing mountains. My trip to Canada covered all of these, it's a stunning country."

Postcode News is printed on Cocoon 50 premium woodfree coated paper. Produced using a high percentage of recovered fibres, delivering superb environmental credentials without compromising quality. Manufactured with 50% recycled fibre and 50% virgin fibre, this paper is FSC® Mix certified.