



Salvage Profit with Postcode Plus

Radical improvements in service and reductions in costs are made with AFD software. This Case Study shows what happened at Universal Vehicle Services.

The process used by Universal Vehicle Services to identify business need, find a solution... and then measure the benefits is also explained. It can be used by any organisation - and any organisation can reap the benefits.

Universal Vehicle Services is one of Europe's largest vehicle service companies. Their 378 staff handle thousands of accident damaged and abandoned vehicles throughout the UK annually. Vehicles are collected, processed and stored prior to auction or processing. Details of recovered vehicles are carefully checked for outstanding payments and for ownership, and identity is matched with DVLA and other sources.



Business expansion combined with a more rigorous and ever changing legal framework led to a decision to review all of Universal's processes and systems and the interface with customers and suppliers. The objective was to design a system utilising highly efficient IT based processes that are adaptable to future legal changes and business needs and deliver higher service standards. To achieve this meant working closely with carefully chosen suppliers, partners and customers including HPI, DVLA, major insurance companies, manufacturers and CRM software provider - Karna, and AFD Software.

BUSINESS NEEDS

This case study is based on an in-depth interview with Rose Wilson, Universal Salvage Business Systems Manager, who was closely involved with an internal review to form the basis for system decisions.

The review included speaking to the drivers of the car transporter fleet who cover the UK from six collection branches. It was here that the biggest complaints were heard.

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CASE STUDY



Rose Wilson explained: "The transporter drivers were simply unable to locate vehicles. The instructions given contained wrong or incomplete address details and they trawled up and down streets - searching. This led to frustration and a waste of resources"

Universal Vehicle Services operate under Service Level Agreements to major clients and apart from the high cost per mile of a car transporter and driver - delays could lead to penalty payments.

"...A careful study showed that location addresses were core to almost every business process."

Similar problems were identified in the call centre where an analysis of 300 forms showed only 10 had valid postal addresses. Rose Wilson summed up "We definitely had a problem with addresses".

A careful study showed that location addresses were core to almost every business process.

SCOPE

The details of approved garages from which vehicles were collected or delivered are held on a database. Many garages are on industrial estates and vital parts of delivery address details were missing - delaying or even making it impossible to collect.

Engineers calling the Universal call centre could often only guess at the vehicle address location - so again address quality was a big problem.

It is very difficult to carry out a thorough finance or DVLA check without the correct address information.

Advising an owner that Universal was in possession of a vehicle or returning personal contents from the car also requires accurate delivery address information.

CHOOSING A SUPPLIER

At the start of the project, Universal invited AFD to propose an address management solution. A detailed technical brief was provided and AFD was asked to visit to demonstrate "proof of concept" by showing a seamless interface to the Karna "Vision" CRM system and to answer all the project team questions. The software had to:

- Find a house number, building name and street name from a Postcode
- Find a postcode from a partial street address
- Find a postcode from a street address





"AFD achieved proof of concept within seconds and a working integration with the browser based Karna CRM system was achieved in one day. All technical questions were answered on the spot. In addition they demonstrated added value through the availability of map data. AFD's depth of experience in thread-safe browser-based implementations and ASP / COM applications gave them a clear technical edge."

MEASURABLE BENEFITS

Universal identified specific benefits to its business (staff, customers and suppliers) from the use of Postcode Plus. Rose Wilson summed these up:

"Firstly, cleaning up our database of approved garages to include industrial estates (which we didn't previously have) has saved time on collections, improved service levels and reduced driver frustration caused by missing or inaccurate address information.

I go to the branches and I can't remember the last time I received a complaint about not being able to pick up vehicles... it just doesn't happen. Drivers pick up their collection sheets confident they will find the addresses and the vehicles easily."

Secondly, because call centre staff can now find addresses from the scant details that are given, they don't have to make calls to vehicle owners to check these basic but essential details.

Thirdly, where we find a difference between the organisation that appears on AFD Postcode Plus and the organisation name on a letterhead we provide both - this increases the chance of a driver spotting a sign - few garages have property numbers!

A further benefit was an improvement in the arrival of written communications to vehicle owners, garages, insurance companies and suppliers. Finally, there is the fact that Service Level Agreements are consistently met and exceeded with collection times down from around five days to just two days."

In all these areas Postcode Plus has brought tangible benefits - but what about support from AFD after the initial "sale"?

SELL & FORGET

Rose continues "Post-sale support has been brilliant. Bob Gokani (AFD Account Manager) has been there showing us new AFD developments and helping to ensure all extensions to our system are smoothly implemented and administrated."

POSTCODE PLUS

See how Postcode Plus can revolutionise your business, visit:

<http://www.afd.co.uk/pcplus.htm>





Extended Support - Free

Monday to Friday 0830 to 1730 AFD have always offered full, free technical support by email [support@afd.co.uk] or telephone [01624 811712].

Now that free email service has been extended to 364 days per year (not Christmas Day!)

How it works

Outside normal working hours emails to **support@afd.co.uk** are monitored each night 9-10 PM. At weekends and bank holidays the service is extended further to additional monitoring 10-11 AM and 4-5 PM. Any urgent support requests are handled straight away others are held to the next working day.

The service is primarily designed for AFD customers with 24/7 operations or those needing to conduct out of hours maintenance operations.

"Once again, excellent support function. It's a shame more companies don't take a leaf out of your book."

Michael Wates - Essential Data Ltd

AFD telephone support - available weekdays 08:30 to 17:30 - is NOT a premium call rate service and if technicians are busy we return 90% of voice mail messages with 15 minutes and the remainder within one hour.

extended support

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Good News for Sun Solaris and Unix Users

A simple out-of-the-box Unix rapid addressing solution is now available for Sun Solaris and Linux users. AFD Postcode Plus components - complete with examples - are ready to integrate lightning fast lookup of the full 27 million UK addresses, in just minutes.

A fully functional evaluation, based on a selection of Birmingham data is provided to enable testing and development of your installation without any commitment. The evaluation provides free source code, full API documentation and libraries for Linux and Solaris - along with the external libraries for use with PL/SQL on Oracle running under UNIX servers.

On request Postcode Plus is also available for other Unix platforms including AIX, HP-UX, DGUX and SCO.

<http://www.afd.co.uk/pcpunix.htm>

AFD Refiner API

NEW

Award winning 'Refiner' address cleansing software is now available to developers with an API. The power of Refiner can now be fully integrated to put automated address correction, updating and de-duplicating right within your database applications.

www.afd.co.uk/refiner.htm

1mb 'Slim' Updates for Pocket Postcode

AFD has solved the challenge of distributing fresh Postcode data each quarter to handheld computers with a unique and innovative solution.



Even the highly compressed AFD Postcode data set is still large in handheld terms and this can present logistical and infrastructure problems. For example transferring a full Postcode data update from PC to handheld simply takes a long time - and there may be many handheld devices to update. Or, a slow modem or WAN connection between a central hub and the depots where devices are connected may make transfer of a full Postcode data set difficult. It may even be that the preference is for devices to stay in the field only being returned to a base in an emergency - making updates virtually impossible.

AFD have developed a unique 'slim update patch', which cleverly solves these problems without compromising the performance of AFD Postcode. Rather than overwriting an old data set with a new one Handheld Computer users can make use of the slim update. This file is just over 1 MB in size making it easy to transfer from Hub to Depot and from Depot to Handheld.

"The slim update system can be incorporated so that it runs automatically when a handheld computer is connected to the main system via a 'cradle'. The handheld is simply set to check periodically for a new update... and if it's the right version to download it and run it. Wherever a CD based update is difficult or speed / bandwidth problems are an issue - we have the answer" **Mike Solomon - AFD Sales Director.**

Slim update is also available for desktop products - please ask for details.



“AFD Software is committed to providing excellent, affordable addressing software to small and large users alike. AFD Postcode products offer a unique combination of more data, faster searching, greater functionality and lower cost.”

DAVID DORRICO, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Data News - Q.3/03

Royal Mail Mailsort - Price Changes

Royal Mail have now received authority from Postcomm to introduce several price changes which affect all Mailsort types supported by MailSaver, apart from Presstream (which were last increased on 6th January 2003). These updates come into effect for all mailings posted on or after Thursday 8th May 2003. Users of AFD's mailsort solution 'AFD MailSaver' can download a free update and view more details at www.afd.co.uk/prodnewsmailsaver.htm

Mailsort Database 2003

Royal Mail has announced that a new Mailsort database will come into use on Monday 28th July 2003. Individual notification has been sent to all existing users of AFD MailSaver.

AFD's monthly Postcode Ownership Plan (POP) covers all costs (including updates) in a single monthly payment. See www.afd.co.uk/pop.htm

Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF) statistics and newly announced changes to postcodes can be found at www.afd.co.uk/datanews.htm

HOT SPOT

Scott Barnham
Support Technician



Scott has a burning ambition to build a house of straw! Straw embodies natural energy (from the sun etc) whereas say concrete embodies industrial energy (not as efficient or friendly to the environment). No, the straw wouldn't catch fire because it's covered in earth-based plaster. Yes, this is the ultimate DIY job.

Having relaxed with a bowl of linguini pasta and a Cohen Brothers comedy you might find Scott delving into 'memetics' reading Richard Brody's 'Virus of the Mind'. (Brody authored the first version of Microsoft word.) Memetics is about ideas - like genetics is about genes - asking 'Which ideas survive?' 'Which prosper or die?' ... and 'Why?'

To help his brain cool down Scott often gets out walking on Isle of Man. He joined AFD because he "wanted to work for a company that had an ethical outlook... more than just making money... a company with a social conscience." Scott's role at AFD includes delivery of support to software developers and integrators of AFD solutions.

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Keep in touch with Postcode developments by visiting the AFD Web Site - where you can try out products, collect free software and obtain technical support.

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