# Hat Trick!

**In a competitive and uncertain climate, organisations are looking for ways to improve productivity, quality & profit performance. Private & Commercial Finance Group plc is such an organisation.**

**An independent, fast growing finance house whose shares are quoted on AIM (part of the London Stock Exchange), PCFG operate in a tough market offering motor and business equipment finance products mainly through a network of brokers. Despite an uncertain environment they have sustained good profits. This case study shows how AFD Software solutions have played an important part in this bottom line result.**

## Growth Hampered

Around three years ago PCFG recognised that processing finance applications manually was hampering growth. Proposal details were received by fax or phone from brokers and the whole process was manual with paper moving round the office to decide in each case whether to advance funds.

## Many Errors

The fax and phone based system resulted in many errors. Credit ratings were often difficult to obtain because of basic inaccuracies in the name and address detail of the applicant or their employer or referee or the quality of the fax. Staff spent time contacting brokers and brokers spent time contacting customers to correct these errors. This led to a lot of frustration, wasted time and even lost business.

Another problem was that Direct Debit mandates would be rejected by BACS. PCFG credit control team would then need to be involved only to find that poor handwriting or transposition errors were the cause. Some customers naturally got upset.

CONTINUED ▶

## Specialist Ability

Of vital importance to brokers was the PCFG specialist ability to deal with 'less straight forward' proposals that demand expert underwriting assessment. However the time of these specialists was often absorbed in administrative detail rather than attending to this valuable source of new business.

The PCFG IT Task Force set out to find a software system, which would put an end to these problems and free up their expert underwriters to deal only with finance proposals, which could not be automated.

Zane Kerse, Financial Controller wanted a system, which could be easily accessed by both internal staff and by brokers across the UK. The aim was minimum information input by the broker delivering maximum output and accuracy to PCFG. He approached four address management companies for a solution that would enable the rapid validation and entry of name, address and bank details - three were invited to present detailed proposals.

## One-stop-shop

Andrew Currie, General Manager New Business noted that "Company culture" was important. "We are a smaller company and it suits us to deal with a company that is friendly and efficient where things are decided quickly and without layers of bureaucracy. AFD have this culture and were also able to offer a "one-stop-shop" covering voters role, addresses and bank information. Finally their licensing and pricing models were realistic. We put pressure on suppliers to answer questions and provide quotes quickly. AFD responded well."

At the same time as searching for address management software Zane and Andrew searched for a finance system that would meet their needs. Zane "In short - there wasn't one. This was quite a surprise."

During this process Transition Computing approached PCFG with a proposal for a new system to streamline workflow over the Internet. The browser based eQuote system was commissioned with AFD Names & Numbers and AFD BankFinder integrated as two core components.

## 50% More - Same Resource

Andrew explained the result "Integrating AFD for rapid entry and validation has allowed us to increase by 50% the proposals we can handle with the same resource. People find the system easy to use. Addresses rapidly entered and validated with Names & Numbers make credit checking much easier. Even "fuzzy" addresses - where brokers are not sure of the detail - can be quickly found. Previously finance documents were often returned undelivered, now there are hardly any.

In addition to validating names and addresses Names & Numbers is used to verify telephone numbers. This has resulted in fewer complaints from PCFG Customer Services saying they can't get through or the number is wrong. With BankFinder the account number and sort code are checked on entry and the ability of a bank to process Direct Debits is confirmed prior to submission to BACS.

"We simply don't get rejects from BACS. People are now no longer wasting their time on rubbish, less proposals are declined and we get our payment on time." Andrew.

David Gibson - Transition Computing MD. "The key point is that PCFG have no control over the brokers who introduce their business. So the eQuote system has to be both friendly and supportive to introducers. That's where AFD comes into its own. Introducers get assistance to help ensure essential personal, employer and bank details are correct - it's excellent."

## Re-Focus and Compete
With repetitive tasks automated by eQuote, PCFG have been able to re-focus the specialist skills of their underwriters on assessing more complex new business deals. Brokers and their customers get the benefit of rapid turnaround and the careful consideration needed for prudent decisions on non-standard proposals. An important side effect is more job satisfaction.

Andrew adds "We compete with direct lenders - you've got to compete. You've got to look at the most efficient ways of managing your business and increasing the bottom line."

## PCFG Hat Trick
And there is solid evidence that PCFG has taken care of the bottom line. They are one of just nine "hat tricker" companies to be awarded the prestigious Deloitte & Touché Indy 100 award for dynamic companies - three years in a row - rising this year to 13th place out of 6116 fastest growing middle market companies.

## AFD Hat Trick
Zane ends "AFD Names & Numbers and BankFinder solutions became a key component in PCFG delivering immediate service improvement, instant cost savings and new room to handle 50% more business without an increase in overhead - a real hat trick that's helped us achieve our hat trick!"

## What can AFD Software products do for your organisation?

www.afd.co.uk/products.htm    www.afd.co.uk/pcnn.htm    www.afd.co.uk/bankfinder.htm

**www.afd.co.uk**

This case study is based on interviews with:
**Andrew Currie -** PCFG General Manager New Business; **Zane Kerse -** PCFG Financial Controller; **David Gibson -** Managing Director of Transition Computing - authors of eQuote

For further details please visit: **www.pcfg.co.uk** / **www.transitioncomputing.com**

# *Software specialists choose AFD...*
# *...for solid reasons.*

**eLUCID**
**clarity in technology**

Elucid are the leading multi channel software specialist and supply AFD Postcode Plus integrated with their award winning Elucid System. Motorworks and The Savile Row Company are two of the latest Elucid customers to receive a solution complete with Postcode Plus. Elucid technical director, Rob Cooper, answered our questions.

**AFD: How important is address management software?**

**RC:** Addresses are core to any mail order, CRM or supply chain system, so address management software is an essential third party component. It needs to add maximum value without being too expensive.

**AFD: Why did Elucid decide to revisit address management software?**

**RC:** We were pursuing new business, and we are always looking at ways of achieving ease of integration with added value and the right price. AFD met these requirements.

**AFD: How easy was integration with Postcode Plus?**

**RC:** The easiest ever with third party software! We used the MS SQL implementation and there was no messing around with DLLs, no external software, just pure SQL. It was a dream to use!

**AFD: And how did it compare with other software in installation time?**

**RC:** Brilliant! We had AFD working in less than four hours. This is substantially less than we have ever managed with other third party software.

**AFD: Were there other benefits?**

**RC:** Indeed. Not only was the software easy to integrate, it also had features not available through the API of other vendors.

From the users' perspective, it's so easy to use. You don't need special characters to invoke special searches. Users can go straight to a specific letterbox address from minimal information, without having to drill down, and without specialist knowledge. That means lower training costs.

**With AFD, fewer steps are needed to pinpoint an address, and they are easier and faster to find.**

**www.afd.co.uk/pcplus.htm**

*Postcode***NEWS**

# *Slim Data Update - First user explains the benefits*

Until now, distributing quarterly data updates for address management software meant distribution by CD. When hundreds of separate sites are involved, this can present logistical problems. Some organisations do deliver updates electronically but a 15 MB update can present infrastructure frustrations. As announced in the last issues of Postcode News, these have now been solved with the new 'slim data update' available for AFD Postcode and AFD Plotter. Initially developed for users of handheld devices, use of the slim data update is now extended to AFD customers handling updates to large numbers of desktop users. The patch system does not compromise performance and its size is around just 1MB per quarter.

The first organisation to implement the desktop update patch system was specialist pharmacy software developer NDCHealth. Technical Director Mike Collier explained how patch updates enable a reduction in cost and an improvement in service:

"Thousands of pharmacists use our software solutions and we are in the process of moving them over to dial up electronic updates for drug data etc. The problem we had was the sheer data size involved in updating UK address data over the wire. We do distribute AFD Postcode electronically each year to around 150 users however when you ramp that up to many hundreds and then to thousands you can see the impact both in terms of the volume of data and the fact we have to cater for low modem speed and band width restrictions. The AFD Postcode slim data updates came just at the right time for us"

NDC are initially rolling out the AFD Postcode update patch system to 500 pharmacies. At around one megabyte per quarter they are able to fully automate the distribution and update process cutting out the need for CD replication and reducing bandwidth and distribution time. The AFD Postcode slim data update is designed for use with larger distributions where the logistics, replication and technical costs are high or infrastructure makes the size of a full update impossible.

*"The AFD Postcode slim update patch system came just at the right time for us"*
**Mike Collier - Technical Director, NDC**

**Action.** If you have avoided regular updates because of difficulty with deployment call John Johnson for details on integration and costs on **01624 811720** or email: **john.johnson@afd.co.uk.**

## NEWSFLASH
**Slim updates are now available for AFD BankFinder. Please ask for details by calling 01624 811711**

# DATA HEALTHCHECK OFFER
## FREE, CONFIDENTIAL & INFORMATIVE

Did you know that it is simply not possible to know the true state of your data by "eye balling" it. Yes, visible address data problems like poor spelling, missing postcodes, and inconsistent formatting give an indication - but this is usually the "tip of the iceberg".

At a session delivered by AFD Software in the Royal Mail Seminar Hub at the National Direct Marketing Show, virtually all participants acknowledged they had address data problems and were unsure exactly what they were or how to sort them out.

**Graeme Howie - AFD Technical Manager** "This highlights the importance of our 'health check service' in enabling every organisation to get a true picture of their address data - in plain English."

"Of course no-one wants to go on record acknowledging a serious address data issue however, feedback from large and small organisations confirms that the heath check service accurately identifies the real issues, shows how they are likely to affect business…. and what can be done to resolve them. That way organisations can take steps to sort things out - with confidence."

**What to do -** simply email a representative sample of address data to **healthcheck@afd.co.uk** and our experts will check it, test it and report on it's condition making recommendations for improvement - without obligation.

# *Vision & Energy*

**Ann Frances Dorricott**
**17 September 1958 - 15 August 2003.**
**AFD Software Director and Founder**

*A personal glimpse by Neville Hilton, AFD Business Development Director*

## *Faith*

Imagine a person who touches people and nations through a clear vision to build a family friendly business that can give substantial sums to charity. This vision of Ann Dorricott gave birth to AFD Enterprises and later to AFD Software which has grown from a one-woman home based business in 1983 to a successful software house serving over 5,500 UK companies. The engine of inspiration and energy which turned vision to reality came from Ann's faith in the good news of Jesus Christ. **www.afd.co.uk/goodnews.htm**

## *Tributes*

Messages and tributes have poured in from a broad community - from customers, business contacts, churches, charitable organisations, colleagues and the many friends Ann developed through the down to earth and welcoming approach which was built into every aspect of her life. **www.dorricott.org/Ann/Memories.htm**

## *A lasting legacy*

Ann lived life without regrets and has left behind a lasting legacy. Two sons, a thriving business and a very special project in France **www.springharvestholidays.com** reflect just a little of this. Beyond the fruits of a clear vision it is perhaps Ann's character that left the deepest impact on all those who knew, worked with, were friends of or received hospitality from her.

Ann's faith affected not only what she accomplished but also who she was - highly practical, warmly hospitable, full of energy and laughter - Ann led by quiet, determined example and will be missed by many - and most especially by her husband David Dorricott and sons, Philip and Stephen.

## *Data News*

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**

## Contact AFD

### By Phone

**01624 811711** (Sales)
**01624 811712** (HelpDesk)
**0800 083 8424** (FREEPHONE Registration)

### By Fax

**01624 817695**

### By Email

**postcode@afd.co.uk**

### By Post

**AFD Software Ltd**
**Old Post Office Lane, West Quay**
**Ramsey**
**ISLE OF MAN**
**IM8 1RF**

### Web Site

**www.afd.co.uk**

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.