

Quality and Freedom

Organisations choose AFD Software to validate names, addresses and bank details for many different reasons. Quality and Freedom are two of them.

In February 2007, Steve Salmon and his family were eating in a pub. His eight year old daughter went to the toilet. She did not return. Find out what happened and how Postcode Internet Online forms an essential part of the solution that brings freedom to play.

Conservatory and window, shutter and blind specialist Thomas Sanderson is bucking the trend. Sales continue to grow and its nationwide service is true to its family values of service and excellence.

How does AFD help deliver the quality data that protects reputation, reduces cost and helps deliver the best customer experience?



Thriving on Quality

Thomas Sanderson has grown from a family-run business into a national company providing Conservatory Blinds, Window Blinds and Shutters. Right now, even during the recession, the firm continues to thrive.

Pulling Together

Many factors are at play including a definite sense of community and 'pulling together' which retains the magic of the family-run business. Also, the blinds and shutters are at the quality end of the market – everything is handmade – and design consultants and installers are highly professional.

Marketing Activity

There is a strong focus on marketing and lead generation activities. A wide range of channels are used including direct mail, page advertising, outbound telemarketing, partnerships with conservatory and building firms, referrals from designers and internet promotion. The sales and marketing activity means that Thomas Sanderson has a database of over a million records and sends a significant volume of direct mail each month.

Jane Nichols, responsible for fulfilling brochure requests, says: "Contact data arrives daily from a variety of sources in electronic format. However, the data formats and the quality of the address data differ widely and contain errors and omissions such as a missing town. We have to be able to fix this quickly, every day."

Foundation for Communication

Jane, who operates AFD Refiner daily for cleansing batches of address data, continues: "It doesn't matter what format the data is received in – Refiner will put it into the format we use for address data and sort out poor spelling, missing postcodes and the many other errors

that occur with address data. Refiner lays a good foundation for professional communication and analysis. During cleansing Refiner adds the Delivery Point Suffix (DPS) which makes it even easier to identify potential duplicate records and to avoid adding these to the database." Thomas Sanderson is now taking automation a step further by integrating entirely automatic cleansing using the Refiner API.

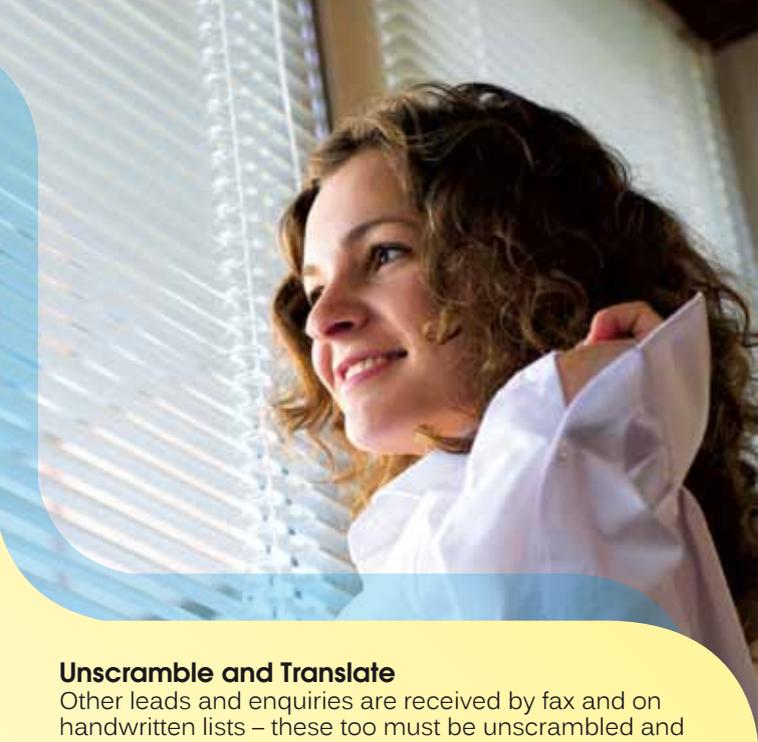
Kelly Dubrok, Thomas Sanderson Planning and Insights Manager underlines the importance of this process: "We are a large user of carefully targeted Direct Mail, sending well over a million items each year. The mail needs to arrive at its destination - without irritating and annoying errors in the name or address and duplicate envelopes. Using AFD helps us get these important details right."

Welcoming and Fast

Gary Cornish is an Appointing Operator who works in the team which receives hundreds of inbound telephone calls each day from potential customers requesting brochures. He explains: "Callers expect the phone to be answered without delay and their details to be recorded efficiently. We can't control when people will call – which means there can be 'peaks' in the number of people calling. When this happens we need to be both welcoming and fast."

Gary continues "Names & Numbers is fully integrated with our internally written systems. We just ask the caller for the first line of their address and the postcode. AFD help us minimise the number of abandoned calls during peak times by reducing the time taken to enter these details by up to 90%. Where we cannot find the accurate address from the postcode we can 'reverse search' by any details such as street name and number or telephone number."





Freedom to Play

Unscramble and Translate

Other leads and enquiries are received by fax and on handwritten lists – these too must be unscrambled and entered accurately into the Thomas Sanderson database. Kelly explains: “At exhibitions some visitors will only give us their postcode, name and house number – it’s up to us to translate this into accurate data so that we can follow-up.” In each of these cases AFD Names & Numbers is deployed to rapidly validate name and address data and to weed out suspicious contact details.

What we want - for the right price

For over fourteen years, as the Thomas Sanderson business has grown, their use of the AFD Postcode range has grown with them. Initially the firm used AFD Postcode which validates addresses to street level. Today both Names & Numbers and Refiner are a core part of the processes that ensure wherever new sales leads or prospect lists are entered, they are validated.

Declan Hillier, Lead Developer for Thomas Sanderson internal systems, concludes: “As the business continues to develop we are upgrading our systems. Having looked at alternatives, we have decided to stay with AFD and are migrating Names & Numbers to .NET. AFD don’t charge for platform migration or for program upgrades. Names & Numbers and Refiner do what we want, at the right price.”

www.afd.co.uk/refiner
www.afd.co.uk/names
www.thomas-sanderson.co.uk

In February 2007, Steve Salmon and his family were eating in a pub. His eight year old daughter went to the toilet. She did not return. Steve and his wife raced round the pub searching – but could not find her. Fifteen minutes later they found her feeding a pony in a nearby field. You can imagine the initial terror at the thought of her being lost and the enormous sense of relief when they knew where she was.

As Steve reflected on his reaction, it struck him that it was at the same time both irrational and understandable.

“The risks to children are actually no worse now than they were twenty five years ago. However, the power of the media with the cases of Ben Needham, James Bulger and Madeline McCann has raised the dangers high in the public mind.”

With over 15 years’ experience in personal satellite navigation and mobile telephony – Steve’s mind started working on how to give a child freedom within boundaries - while removing fear from the parent.



The more he researched, the clearer Steve became on the need to find a way to restore childhood freedom. “Fewer children are allowed to play in the park without adult supervision or walk to school. *One in three parents will not even allow children aged eight to fifteen to play outside the house or garden unsupervised.*”



Steve set up Lok8u in 2007 and now, just two years on, the firm has developed and is launching a special watch for children aged 3-12 called Nu.M8. His engineering team applied a wealth of knowledge gained from several years working on military and consumer satellite applications. All the child sees is a funky-looking watch!

Steve describes what he sees as the key benefits: "Firstly, parents can set a boundary for their children and, if the boundary is crossed, the watch will send an alert to the parent's mobile phone. The boundary is flexible so it can be re-negotiated and re-set as children get older."

"Secondly, if the watch is removed or if the child removes the watch an alert is immediately sent to the parent and the watch goes into 'live tracking' mode."

"Thirdly, if a parent wants to know where the child is they can send a "Where are you?" request and the watch will return the location of the child. We've linked this to AFD Postcode Internet Online service. *We send the grid references to AFD and their service return the nearest Royal Mail PAF® address to the child's location.*"

The importance of sending a full address is clear. Steve continues *"Sending a parent grid references of a location is not helpful, whereas sending a full address with postcode makes the location real* – and of course this links to Google Maps for additional visibility and clarity."



"After trawling the market looking for the most resilient solution, AFD Postcode Internet Online proved to be both reliable and cost-effective. "

To find out more please visit www.lok8u.com and see www.afd.co.uk/online

What will Postcode Internet Online do?



The lok8u Nu.M8 watch is an unusual use of AFD's hosted service 'Postcode Internet Online'. The service is used extensively on public access web sites to make it faster and easier for visitors to leave accurate address and bank details. That way organisations can deliver the goods and collect the money!

Preventing errors in the entry of card numbers, account numbers and bank details means preventing problems. High quality address data, shorter web forms and successful delivery is good for your organisation's reputation - and good for cash flow.

Postcode Internet Online can be integrated with your web site using practically any web programming language (e.g. ASP, ASP.NET, PHP, ColdFusion, Perl, Python). Results are returned in an XML format and a .NET compatible web service is also available.



Royal Mail Licensing

As Postcode News goes to press the draft Royal Mail PAF license agreement which will replace the existing agreement is still being discussed and negotiated. It is expected that the final license will come into effect during 2010. AFD believe that most customers will not be adversely affected by these changes.

No Compromise

As times get tougher it can be tempting to compromise our integrity. Our sales staff have noticed some organisations taking 'back-handers', ignoring Royal Mail legal license obligations or offering personal inducements to win business. AFD just won't do these things - which means that sometimes we have had to decline business. However, we all sleep easy and so do our customers. No skeletons!

"Right from the start we decided to build a business that does what it says – and we still do. We won't compromise the integrity of others through inducements or sign agreements that we don't keep. We'll never push a customer to buy something we don't believe is best for their business. We enjoy delivering excellent affordable name, address and bank data validation solutions – professionally and honestly, and I'm sure that is why customers chose to stay with AFD – some for well over ten years!"

David Dorricott, AFD Group Managing Director.



The latest AFD data release (Q.3/09) sees over 141,000 new delivery addresses, over 10,000 new postcodes and 13 new localities. Postal Address Data is constantly changing - new buildings are constructed, existing buildings are changed to apartments or back to large houses, and some are demolished. Royal Mail Postcode Address File statistics and newly announced changes can be found at:

www.afd.co.uk/news/datanews

Bank administration is also constantly changing. Consolidation, centralisation, re-organisation and regionalisation are regular occurrences. Without BankFinder updates, details that should be rejected may be accepted and vice versa. Occasional 'emergency updates' from BACS are immediately made available to BankFinder customers who receive updates.

Updates range in price from £60 +VAT per annum to £150 +VAT per annum depending on the product. For details and to order updates please call **01624 811711** or email: postcode@afd.co.uk. AFD's monthly Postcode Ownership Plan (POP) covers all costs (including updates & VAT) in a single monthly payment.

www.afd.co.uk/pop



Hot Spot

Paul Laudiangco - Graphic Designer

Paul has worked across the globe. He is from the Philippines and after working in the Middle East for five years moved to the Isle Of Man. "It was a gamble - I moved to be with my wife - but it's paid off."

Graduating with a BSc in Computer Science, Paul didn't expect to end up with a career in design, "I love designing, it's like playing - except you get paid for it!"

"I enjoy working at AFD. We're like family here. People care for each other. I've got freedom to explore my creativity in different forms of media".

Paul doesn't like curry - but does like spice. His favourite food is a Philippine dish called Adobo (pretty close to Adobe!) chicken with soya, oyster and chilli sauce. In addition to eating chicken Paul likes reading 'Chicken Soup for the Soul' and other inspirational books.

Bringing expert design input to all AFD Group businesses in print and web - Paul is married and has a young son. Paul enjoys spending time with the family - relaxing after producing Postcode News!

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