



Margin Up. Costs Down.

A quiet revolution is going on in IT teams across the country and it is resulting in healthier finances.

The traditional barriers between the mysterious 'techies' and those who run the business and deliver frontline activities are being dissolved.

A determination to listen, collaborate and engage is enabling the IT function to deliver new levels of operational and service improvements. This is enabling organisations to retain a competitive edge by driving costs down and margins up.

In this edition of Postcode News you can read two very different inspirational stories – and read how AFD Solutions are designed to be at the heart of the revolution.





Better Results with AFD Names & Numbers[®]

Chris Skelton
Data Research Manager
GMCP Connexions

GMCP provides the Connexions services to seven Local Authorities in the North West of England. Employing 400 staff, GM Connexions Partnership seeks to help ensure all young people are in employment, education or training. This Local Authority-funded service has its roots in the Careers Service and it tracks a cohort of 70,000 young people aged between 16-19 years. In addition it has particular focus on those who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and those who are vulnerable such as those leaving care, young single mothers and those who have been dealt with by the Youth Offending Team.

Each year in September and October, the Connexions team has to identify the status of 56,000 young people. Some of this can be done via schools and colleges or via the local authority, but around 5,000 are identified as hard to track. The last option is to conduct a personal home visit. Chris Skelton, Data Research Manager, explained:

Expensive home visits

“Home visits are incredibly expensive. We have to send two Personal Advisors or Progression Workers. There is a high probability no-one will be in during the day, so this means weekend or evening visits which add further costs. Even with careful and efficient planning to minimise journey times, a team of two will see on average about 10 young people per day.”

Often the reason a visit is necessary is because no telephone number can be found. Chris continued: “Telephone contact is efficient and effective. During a call we can usually obtain the information we need within a few minutes. Home visits, even if successful, may result in a longer discussion and take over 30 minutes each.”

Missing Phone Numbers

Chris wanted to maximise efficiency and reduce costs by finding missing telephone numbers and tracking down some of those 'hard to find' young people that have simply disappeared from school, education, and training and Local Authority databases. GMCP heard about AFD Names & Numbers which has the names of 42 million people, 14 million of them with a telephone number. Chris invited AFD Software in to understand what GMCP did and to demonstrate how Names & Numbers worked and how it might fit within the organisation's processes.

Monetary Return on Investment

The potential benefits were clearly visible so GMCP started off with a single user Names & Numbers license. Chris added: "With a typical batch of 100 records we were able to identify telephone numbers of the homes of about 22 young people. To visit those people would have taken around four man days. It is easy to see how we are expecting savings of more than £20,000 per year against an investment of £1,100 for a Names & Numbers license." In fact GMCP have now purchased further licenses to provide direct access in regional offices.

Social Return on Investment

Chris concludes: "This is not just about efficiency. The social benefit of contacting a young vulnerable person at the right time cannot be overstated. We can only support young people if we can communicate with them. Names & Numbers enables us to find people who would otherwise slip through the net. This increases the life chances of those we serve and helps young people to be trained and ready to make an economic contribution to the nation. It's a win win."

Call **01624 811711** to speak to one of our experts about your needs.



www.afd.co.uk/names
www.connexionslive.com

How to make your business more exciting... and save more and make more.

This is a simple story - but worth the telling. For 25 years Personal Group Holdings have successfully delivered insurance plans to hundreds of thousands of customers. But how do you significantly raise your game - really engage with customers on the sales journey, while retaining absolute integrity throughout the process? And, how do you eliminate every piece of paperwork - completely?

A noble commercial quest

That was the quest of CEO Mark Scanlon and he drew in each part of the business in a collaborative IT-driven venture that rested not just on automating business processes and compliance needs, but had to simultaneously deliver a radical change to the social aspect of the sales process.

Field-based sales staff would visit prospective customers in their work places. Each insurance policy sold involved the completion of lengthy paper forms which would be returned to the Head Office at the end of each week where they would be manually re-keyed. Group IT Director Matt Rogers has stewardship of operational IT. He picks up the story:

Do we need to be cool, and is it enough to be cool?

“In our view a move to paperless processes required a laptop or notebook – probably ruggedized to withstand the rigours of visits to factories, garages and post offices. But laptops present a barrier – they are clumsy, the battery life is not long enough, they take time to boot up. The staff wanted the Apple iPad because it looks cool – and I have to say I initially dismissed this! But when compared to the alternatives, it won: it is rugged, it doesn’t need to boot – and it is engaging. In short it is cool! So we took the plunge and built a paperless field sales world around the iPad.

A phased introduction led to buy-in from the sales team. Initially the iPad replaced paper illustrations and complemented the paper processes. This got our 50 strong field sales team familiar with the device prior to the role-out of our internally-written iPad application.



Selling and Customer Engagement

The application was built to engage the customer at each stage – even recording the time a person reviewed a product or its conditions – so that Personal Group could ensure sales staff were not rushing customers to a decision.

Customers are inquisitive about the iPad from the beginning of the presentation – it has a cross-generational appeal and creates an element of excitement in the process. They see the sales presentation on the iPad and answers to legislative and regulatory questions are recorded on it in a relaxed and conversational style.

Matt continued: "The customer can hold the iPad and read, decide and accept terms and products for themselves – it is engaging and feels natural – it facilitates a good relationship. Each person is taken on a journey and when that journey is complete – they can simply choose whether to sign or not. The focus is no longer on the paperwork – it's on the products and the relationship.

Treating customers fairly

The iPad application drives best practice and actually puts the customer in control. Not only does the process ensure we treat customers fairly – it enables us to demonstrate that we do so by capturing what happens at every stage of the process. The funny thing is many customers ask if they can buy an iPad from us!

Rigid Data Standards

Uniquely AFD Software offer name, address and bank data validation for the Apple products in an "off-line" installed mode. For us, no connection equals no sale – we're dead in the water – so a design principle was that all components must be installed. We wanted to ensure that data standards were rigidly kept to eliminate re-keying, spelling mistakes and errors. Precise address information is essential to our back office systems, analysis and business intelligence."

Blown away by AFD Software *(in a good way!)*

Matt concluded: "From a developers perspective, three things blew me away about the AFD iOS Postcode Plus solution. First, it comes with a code library and a database – that's it. Second, 29 million addresses are squeezed down to just 190Mb. Third, the speed of lookups is absolutely instant. We now want to ensure we check customer bank details at the point of entry and have scheduled to integrate AFD BankFinder in the next release of our application."

Field Sales Performance Up 21%

“The most impressive statistic is that field sales performance for the first half of this year is up 21%. The real beauty is that we have pushed a lot of dull stuff into the background so that our sales team have more time to bring the best of us to our customers. AFD Postcode Plus is a hidden but essential component part of Personal Group's success!”

Mark Scanlon - Personal Group Holdings CEO

Core Upgrade

A version upgrade to all installed AFD Products was introduced in Q.3/13. This behind-the-scenes upgrade to the core of our products lays a foundation for future enhancements. This upgrade requires no action on your part. If you did not take the Q.3/13 update you will receive the upgrade as part of your next update.

HOT SPOT

Sam Drye

Business Development Executive

After four years with AFD Software Sam leaves in December to move "down-under" to Melbourne. After years of rejection by girls, Sam was on a night out enjoying the Leeds nightlife where he met Stephanie, an Australian in England studying German (No it doesn't make sense to us either). Stephanie is moving back to Australia and this has made Melbourne look very attractive.



Sam has developed some great skills and made a solid contribution at AFD Software. "I've grown in confidence with people and developed as a sales professional. I've enjoyed having personal responsibility and having a focus on developing new business which brings real results that are good for the customer and for the company."

"The team I work with is strong and I am sad to leave such a positive working environment. It has been enjoyable being trained and coached and then going on to train and coach others. My biggest disappointment is that Arsenal doesn't play in Australia. But the upside is that live football from the UK is viewed in bars down-under at about 9 at night – a perfect time."

Sam plans to chill out in January on the Sunshine Coast and with a bit of water rafting and adventure in Tasmania – then it's back to work. Good luck from all of us here Sam!

AFD Data News Q.4/13

Over the past three months there have been significant updates to data on the Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF). These include 58 new localities, 6,966 new postcodes, 100,833 new delivery points and 33,489 delivery point changes. These are all included in our latest Q.4/13 update which is now released. The Q.4/13 Names & Numbers update is due for release shortly.

Are you receiving regular data updates?

We recommend a minimum of quarterly updates to all AFD products that contain address information. So, if you are using AFD Postcode, Postcode Plus or Names & Numbers it is worth checking that you receive and apply data updates on a regular basis. If you are uncertain that you are receiving updates please email postcode@afd.co.uk and we will check for you.

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