

The SAS® Specialists



Amadeus helps npower transform the speed and efficiency of customer and prospect marketing communications

• CHALLENGES

- Pressure on utility companies to reduce face-to-face communications and focus on alternative marketing channels
- Existing system for managing customer record data old and inflexible
- Volume of data that needed processing increasing every month

• SOLUTION

- SAS® 9.2 Solution
- Amadeus services: application analysis and refactoring

• BENEFITS

- Saves the equivalent of one person in reduced IT time and resources
- Cuts the time to process new data from days to 30 minutes
- Helps deliver new lead data to the customer contact centre faster
- Enables non-technical staff to use a sophisticated application with minimal training
- Delivers a very fast, accurate and professional service

“The service that Amadeus has provided to npower is very significant. Stakeholder pressure is restricting the marketing channels – such as face-to-face – that utilities use to communicate with customers so Amadeus’ work in helping npower create a robust and effective way to deliver high quality data into our telesales operation is very important for the business”



Challenges

RWE npower is a leading UK energy company and is part of the RWE Group, one of Europe’s leading utility companies. The company serves around 6.5 million residential and business customers and produces around 10 percent of the electricity used in Great Britain.

Stakeholder pressure is tightening up the way utilities market their services and npower is increasingly turning to telesales instead of face-to-face to communicate with customers and prospects. It regularly carries out campaigns to customers and prospects to promote existing and new products and associated services, such as home insulation services.

Campaigns involve contacting customers by telephone using automated diallers or customer contact agents. The contact data – sourced internally and externally - is meticulously checked to ensure it meets strict telephony and data protection regulations. For example, npower searches and applies

suppressions to customer records where the customer has signed up to the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) to block unsolicited sales or marketing calls. In a year, the data can amount to as much as eight million records.

Over a number of years, npower developed its own SAS-based system for checking the data and applying suppressions where necessary. But the application – called Work Request - had been changed, upgraded and altered many times and was now old and inflexible. It could only handle certain file formats in which the data was supplied.

For example, npower has temporary and new contact centres for specific projects, often with different systems which require data in different formats. npower staff would have to make significant changes to the application for each new data format.

Also, every time a new suppression was added, it needed significant changes to the code, which had to be done manually. Changing the application code on a regular basis

“We didn’t really look at any other supplier because we’ve worked with Amadeus on a number of projects, the company has provided fantastic service and it has a very good reputation.”

was both risky and ill-advised for such a critical business process and could only be performed by a handful of individuals who had a detailed knowledge of the application.

npower turned to its trusted and long-time partner Amadeus Software.

Solution

Amadeus carried out an audit of the Work Request application and then provided npower with a list of improvement recommendations. Tim Butler, Data Delivery Analyst at npower, says, “What we got back from Amadeus was excellent and it was done so quickly. The document, which was some 20 pages long, came back within a few days and was professional, highly detailed and very accurate in meeting our expectations. I just didn’t think it was possible to do this so quickly.”

Amadeus worked with npower to action some of the recommendations. Amadeus cleaned up the system and made the core code much more robust. The two critical transformations that Amadeus delivered were to re-engineer the application so that users no longer needed to make detailed and complex code changes and, secondly, to enable npower to use simple spreadsheets to implement suppressions.

Benefits

The solution that Amadeus has delivered to npower has transformed the Work

Request application from one that was slow and cumbersome to one that is fast, flexible and easy to use. Changes to accommodate new campaign information or apply new suppressions, which could take up to several days to implement, now take little more than 30 minutes.

Butler says, “Amadeus has helped npower save a significant amount of money, especially in terms of the time it used to take to manage the Work Request application. Amadeus has saved npower the equivalent of one technical person’s time needed when changes were made to the application which means that we now have a lot more time to work on other added-value projects.”

The application is much simpler and can now accept data in any file format. For example, suppression criteria which used to require complex re-coding is now added to a simple spreadsheet and then run against the appropriated data.

“We’ve got at least two new contact centres coming on line in the next few months and I’ve no idea what systems they will have or what data formats they will need, but with the new system it doesn’t matter because I know that I will be able to use it quickly and easily to produce the right data sets,” says Butler.

Now non-technical staff can easily use the system to make changes with less than half a day’s training. Before, making similar changes would require a fully trained and experienced SAS expert.

Campaign data can come in many different formats and varying degrees of cleanliness and because Work Request can now handle different formats and quality, it is much easier and faster to produce the data the business needs. Butler says, “When someone enters an npower competition and is happy to be contacted, they supply their contact information and that data comes through to us. But if we can’t deliver that data to the contact centre for a week or two, because of problems in the system, that’s a long time between npower being in their minds and us following up the contact.”

Previously, Work Request used to fail quite regularly, but since Amadeus re-engineered the application, it has never failed. One of the changes Amadeus implemented was to clean up error coding so that the system no longer constantly stops to report minor issues. These are now logged and can be dealt with in downtime and the error messages that do appear are much more useful.



About Amadeus – The SAS Specialists

Amadeus Software Limited, formed in 1989, provides Business Intelligence Solutions. We are a SAS 9 Preferred Implementation Partner for delivering SAS projects across all industries. Our outstanding reputation was won by providing first-class solutions, unrivalled technical support and clear, practical training. We are at the forefront of Business Intelligence technology and we provide solutions that meet customer objectives, reinforced by project management processes that provide quality assurance and successful delivery.