TRILLIUM SOFTWARE™

a division of Harte-Hanks

Centrica®

The Trillium Software System® delivers unified customer views for the leading Centrica brands British Gas and the AA, managing over 30 million transactions per month.

Project Type
CRM
Data Warehousing
Data Consolidation

Industries
Utility
Telecom
Financial
Travel

Challenges
Large Volume of Records
Third-party Data Sources
Diverse Legacy Systems, Various Sources, Multiple Formats
Scalability
Processing Speed

The Company

Centrica is the holding company of four of the UK's best-known consumer brands: British Gas, the AA, Goldfish and One.Tel.

Centrica plc was established in 1997, following the de-merger of British Gas plc. This marked the birth of a new corporate identity designed to empower an ambitious management team focused on growing the core businesses within British Gas and targeting additional brands that complement the Centrica proposition.

Since 1997, Centrica has grown its energy business. Today, through British Gas Residential, it serves more than 13 million residential gas and 5.6 million residential electricity customers and is the largest provider of home installation and appliance servicing in the UK. In addition, Centrica Business Services supplies gas and electricity to 760,000 business customers representing 26% of the UK commercial energy market.

At the time of the de-merger, Centrica retained ownership of the Goldfish financial brand. Today it has over one million credit cards in issue and provides travel and home insurance, loans and savings accounts.

In 1999, Centrica added to its portfolio by acquiring the UK's largest motoring organisation, the Automobile Association (AA), for £1.1 billion. Today, the AA has evolved into one of the country's best known brands with 12.5 million Road Services members, a chain of AA Service Centre Garages (previously Halfords Garages) and, through AA Personal Finance, more than 1.6 million insurance and finance policy holders.

Continuing to acquire and grow leading brands, Centrica in 2001 entered the telecommunications market with the acquisition of One.Tel. The company currently provides more than 1.2 million active services including fixed-line and mobile communications.

The Challenge

Following the acquisition of the AA, Centrica faced the challenge of managing two prolific customer databases representing nearly 19 million energy customers and 12.5 million AA members.

Centrica's objective was to create a combined CRM database that delivered a single comprehensive and current view of each customer within the British Gas and AA businesses. This would allow Centrica to achieve its desired standards of customer service, communication, transaction management and marketing strategy.

Implementing the CRM "hub" presented a series of complex customer data challenges. Marco Smith, Customer Database Manager of Centrica explains: "To successfully merge two such large entities we had to be able to manage customer contact information effectively. We were faced with millions of customer records, coming from many disparate legacy systems, via a variety of sources and in a wide range of formats. We also had to be able to identify which customers were common to both brands and differentiate between business cus-

tomers and consumers. To add a further dimension, we had to be able to manage information brought in via 'cold lists' purchased externally for marketing purposes. Such 'cold data' is extremely valuable in identifying new customers and sales opportunities, but only if we can determine which customers on a list we already serve."

Centrica needed a solution that would scale to handle the growing portfolio of services being offered by the British Gas and AA brands, as well as differentiate and maintain current and historical information for future marketing purposes.

Smith continued: "Due to the volume of data and nature of the transactions concerned, speed of operation was also a key consideration. We needed a system that could manage this data extremely quickly and cope with data feeds from a growing number of sources. The two brands combined generate around 30 million transactions per month, ranging from name and address changes to new policy subscriptions, renewals, upgrades and downgrades of packages, bill payments and so on. These transactions come from many sources including call centres, postage and online systems. Our solution had to be able to cope with this magnitude of activity and scale to address growth in customer volumes and communication mechanisms."

With up to 50 million direct mail communications per year to British Gas and AA customers, customer data quality represented a key determinant in the efficiency and effectiveness of the mailings as well as the success of the brands concerned.

The Solution
Centrica took the opportunity presented by the AA acquisition to review its entire CRM strategy and decided to develop a single data warehouse to hold all of its customer information for the British Gas and AA brands. Holding this information in one central hub would provide the basis for more effective data, transaction and communication management across both brands in the future.

"Having already used the Trillium Software System® to manage data quality within the British Gas business, we recognised its ability to cope with large and complex data challenges," explained Smith. "It was an obvious choice to employ the Trillium Software System again as part of our overall technology strategy for combining our CRM systems."

Centrica uses the Trillium Software System to take customer address information from disparate legacy systems and realtime information sources and cleans, standardises and re-codes it according to business rules Centrica predefines. This customer information passes through the Parser, which analyses, standardises, and enhances the name and address data. The process also identifies whether records are for businesses or residences. The Geocoder verifies addresses against the Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF). Finally, the Matcher links records associated with each unique customer. ™

Investigation, standardisation, enrichment and linking processes identify and cleanse inconsistencies and duplicates in the data, delivering a unified customer view inside the data warehouse. Centrica can use the cleansed and structured customer contact information to support all aspects of CRM activity. The Trillium Software System lets Centrica establish a clear picture of which customers attach to which brands and for which products and services.

The Results
The Trillium Software System lets Centrica centralise its customer data management and establish a powerful unified customer view for British Gas and the AA, bringing a range of current and future benefits.

"Achieving a 'unified customer view' is the bedrock of good CRM," Smith stated. "The Trillium Software System has enabled us to establish the level of customer data quality needed as a foundation for effective customer management and business decision-making moving forward."

Smith continued: "The Trillium Software System responds in real time to the huge volume of transactions undertaken every month by British Gas and AA customers. This enables us to maintain this high level of customer data quality, irrespective of the growing diversity of information sources and communication mechanisms."

Trillium Software Professional Services consultants supported Centrica throughout the deployment of the Trillium Software System, ensuring that valuable knowledge and best practices were transferred to the in-house team.

Moving forward, Centrica is looking to integrate its Goldfish customer data into the combined CRM hub. It expects One.Tel to follow. The result should be a solid foundation of unified customer views for a truly integrated CRM strategy.

> 66 99
>
> *The Trillium Software System has enabled us to establish the level of customer data quality needed as a foundation for effective customer management and business decision-making.*
>
> Marco Smith, Customer Database Manager, Centrica