

New Forest District Council - Case Study

The New Forest District covers an area of 290 square miles in South West Hampshire and is dominated by the New Forest – an area of great natural beauty and of ecological importance. The expanding conurbation of Southampton lies to the east and Bournemouth is to the west. The New Forest is predominately rural with a population of 173,000

The Customer Services Team deal with enquires from the general public regarding environmental issues, such as cleansing, refuse, special collections, general street furniture, waste recycling and abandoned vehicles. For many years the logging of calls was supported by a simple database system developed in-house. The Customer Services Team were processing approximately 58,000 calls per annum up to the year 2000. As part of a programme of business transformation projects, the need to develop a more robust information system for Customer Services was identified.

Phase One

The original system was replaced in 1999 using Status - CRM level one. The implementation of Status - CRM preserved the functionality of the original system but also improved upon it to include:

- The creation of contacts list. This list provides for both internal and external contact information such as telephone numbers and email addresses.
- The ability to assign a default contact for each enquiry type. This makes the contact information readily available to all operators.
- The ability to automatically email or fax, enquiry details to the default contact, or any member on the contact list.
- A user defined help system.
- Program modules. A table of program modules was introduced.
- Post code and partial address lookup. This was enabled by the integration of the Quick Address system within the new program. The address data is based on the Royal Mail PAF (Post Office Address File).

The Status- CRM system was introduced in the first quarter of the year 2000 and recorded over 70,000 calls during the first twelve months of its use.

Phase two

A second phase of development of the system commenced in 2002. This phase enhanced the functionality of the original system by providing full integration with a GIS mapping system (provided by Cadcorp). The GIS feature provides graphical feedback to the operators in the form of maps. All new enquires now store map coordinates within the database.

Other new Status - CRM modules have also been added comprised of two separate parts:

- An information capture screen that is fully integrated within the customer services main enquiry form. For example the "Abandoned Vehicles" module prompts the operator for information such as the registration number, colour, condition and location of the vehicle being reported.

- A module used by the operators to process the enquiry. The information entered in each module is used as feedback to the Customer Services operators as an aid to provide up-to-date and accurate information to the public. For example the "Abandoned Vehicles" will provide information on the current status of a known vehicle detailing statutory notices and inspections that have been affixed or carried out.

On screen and printed maps are included in every module where they help to improve the service, or aid the process. Many new reports have also been added along with the ability to export the reported data into spreadsheets for further management analysis.

TECHNOLOGY COMPONENTS

The Status-CRM system has been developed using Microsoft Visual Studio 6, with Microsoft SQL server 7, hosting the data. This allows for:

- A robust integrated development environment that includes all the necessary tools to develop WEB aware applications.
- Tools for building robust database applications that connect to the desktop as well as high-end database management systems.
- Graphically based management tools.
- Enterprise class applications.
- SQL server supports data larger than several terabytes.
- Scalability.
- Secure Transactions.
- Support for transaction rollback across multiple servers.
- Distributed load balancing.
- Online analytical processing
- Built in Client Server Model. Fully supports the client server model and the latest N-Tier architecture.
- Improved online backup

The deployment and development of this system will be the cornerstone for New Forest District Council to meet its targets for electronic service delivery.

The Status - CRM system is a key driver in transforming the way that services are delivered. The Council's vision states that we should fully utilise ICT to enable joined up working with partners internally to provide seamless services to customers when and where they are required to consistently high standard.

The role of the Customer Services Team will be expanded to establish a Customer Contact Centre. The Status - CRM System will provide the information systems platform for this Contact Centre. Initially the range of enquiries handled will be expanded to include pest control and electoral registration. Later phases could comprise council tax and benefits enquiry processing.

"People want convenient access to more responsive services. They want better access to services in the evening and at weekends, and a faster response to and better ownership of their enquiries. People do not want to be passed from one person to another without it being dealt with." – Audit Commission July 2002.

The Status - CRM system fulfils all of the above points. The Contact Centre using the Status - CRM system :

- Provides an improved the first line response to customers
- Enables extended opening hours
- Allows us to open new channels of communications between our customers and the Council, via fax. Email and kiosks

The key innovations provided by Status - CRM were:

- Direct links into back office databases, providing Customer Service staff with real time information
- Providing Customer Service staff with a simple to use interface to information, i.e. linking of GIS with addressing information with databases.
- Providing our customers with a simple to use interface, via the web, to report or find information via a 'self service portal'.

STATUS - CRM SYSTEM - VISION FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

In order to meet the prime objective of developing the system to support the Council's Contact Centre a third phase of development is planned. This development is to be funded from some of the funding received through our IEG Statement submission.

The development timetable is as follows: Within the next 6 months new features will be developed comprising

To provide officers and Councillors direct access to the most up to date information held on the system.

To maximise the use of the Councils Intranet to join up internal operations across Directorates by the development of Web based forms.

To utilise Extranets to join up with external partners by the development of Web based forms.

To utilise the Internet to provide a public interface to the Councils customers by the development of Web based forms.

To improve the monitoring of service delivery standards achieved by the council.

Enhancements to be incorporated

Forms to capture customer enquiries.

Develop an enquiry queuing system. All new enquiries originating from the generic Web form will pass through this queue. This will stop any spamming of the system from outside sources.

Develop an automatic response reply system to Web enquires. Once the enquiry has passed though the queue a reference number will be assigned.

Develop a Web site where customers may logon using the enquiry reference number and password provided above to check the progress of their enquiry.

Develop a Web based read only mapping information system. This will allow customers and members to view the district maps and zoom to locations using Quick Address

Develop an intranet version of the main enquiry screen. This will use FoxPro Forms hosted within a Web browser. By using XML, HTML and FTP this will allow enquires to be viewed, amended or added across low bandwidth links whilst still maintaining the current systems features.

Integration with the councils new Web payment collection system using a secure WEB connection. Allow for automatic updates via electronic mail