



Advanced Peripheral Systems uses FileMaker Pro to turn around their business

FileMaker Pro helps Advanced Peripheral Systems improve customer satisfaction, increase revenue, provide additional revenue stream and secure new business

“We have generated an additional revenue stream and secured new business using this solution,” Andy Fox, managing director of APS.

History of company

Advance Peripheral Systems [APS] was established in 1993 with a mission to provide a comprehensive range of fire and security solutions. “We continually strive to improve our efficiency and to select the most appropriate of the available technologies,” says Andy Fox, managing director of APS. “The key objective for APS has always been to provide exceptional customer care and this has enabled us to develop into one of the largest independent, integrated fire and security companies within the UK.”

APS offers its customers support throughout the entire system life from initial specification through to on going maintenance and service. Installations range from the provision of a single system within a building to a fully integrated fire and security solution connected to multiple locations.

Customer satisfaction is the company’s top priority and it invests in its people and management systems to ensure that it maintains the highest level of service.

Business Challenge

When Andy Fox was appointed as APS’s Managing Director in 2004, the company was still struggling with an expensive “out-of-the-box” £50K service management solution. Andy Fox believed the existing solution was contributing to massive losses: administration costs were spiralling, the system lacked efficiency and staff perception was that the system was not helping them complete their duties.

The company was based in two locations. Engineers were working predominantly in London, and they were struggling to use PDAs to get information back to the office. All paperwork needed to be held at the Worcester HQ, which meant the majority of paperwork was being transferred weekly by courier.

Andy Fox felt there needed to be a significant investment in streamlining and updating their IT solutions to tackle the issue of huge company losses. APS needed to receive all job data from the engineers electronically so that records could be maintained, but there was also a large amount of paper work required to be generated for customers to meet Health and Safety standards. The existing office software was a mix of applications; a FileMaker Pro database that didn’t utilise the latest functionality, a range of Microsoft solutions, and an inefficient

service management solution that was managing the booking of engineers and generation of quotes and certificates.

All this resulted in a less than satisfactory situation for customers, who wanted to receive a quote promptly following an assessment, and the appropriate paperwork upon completion.

APS's IT consultant Computech could see that what was needed was a solution using FileMaker Pro, that would work with other available technologies to return data from engineers using Destiny Wireless Pen and Paper Solution, and therefore would have to be simple to support remotely. Computech could see that FileMaker Pro's interface was already familiar to most members of staff, and with its rapid and flexible development potential, it would answer all APS's requirements.

Successful solution

Computech's Garry Thompson and Andy Fox investigated the option of creating a bespoke FileMaker Pro solution. Andy Fox says that up until that point in time, the FileMaker Pro software was the most effective, flexible and easy to use solution in the company, and he wanted to look at the options for rolling it out across other systems, at the same time as the company was replacing PDAs with the Destiny Wireless Solution. The change meant that all data was "written" on paper forms while recorded with the Destiny Wireless solution. This info was received by APS directly into FileMaker Pro, with all key job data sorted into the correct search fields, and a scanned copy of the original sheet "filed" within the system. The new system was then able to manage all quote sheets and text reports.

Customer benefits

Six months after fully launching the FileMaker Pro solution, APS is already back in profit. The new FileMaker Pro based system managed to save costs on employing one full-time staff member to solely work on data entry, and a service manager was no longer required. This had a dramatic effect, cutting the company's losses by 83%.

Other savings were made immediately. Overnight the £150 weekly courier costs to transfer all files from London office to Worcester HQ were virtually eliminated.

"All our staff is fully behind the new system. Engineers spent on average half-an-hour to enter job/quote details in the old days; this has been reduced to 15 minutes with paper forms," says Andy Fox.

"Our engineers are now more productive, and spend less time recording and sending information for company records, which means they can take on more jobs throughout the day."

"It is much quicker for engineers to raise a job and enter the details onto a form with a digital pen. The engineer is on-site and can describe the job in front of him using an unlimited number of characters and drawings. The accuracy is dramatically improved, and because the information is transmitted electronically, the customer can keep the written copy, but the data can be processed and returned to the customer as a quote the same day," says Andy Fox. "We have reduced the time it takes to generate a work order from two weeks to one day, effectively. We can now get more work done, and because the information we are using is more accurate and reliable, we are working more efficiently."

Equally important is the fact that APS has now cultivated an image of being efficient, technologically interesting and up-to-date which has helped win further contracts, including recently the Tate Britain.

"Quotes or invoices used to take two or three weeks to reach clients due to processing data time. Now clients receive an instant paper report and digital information in around 30 minutes (essential in Fire & Security industry to comply with regulations)," adds Andy Fox.

Looking ahead Andy Fox definitely sees FileMaker Pro as a long-term solution. "We are looking forward to taking advantage of the new features in future versions of FileMaker Pro, which will make us even more efficient when it comes to processing the engineer schedules. Particularly when a customer calls, we will immediately be able to see the site location the customer is referring to in the web viewer. This will assist us in our engineer deployment."

With the reduction in operating costs APS is now able to launch a promotion, and go after old contracts by offering a discount.

"We are planning to resell the total solution, including the service management database, to our regular contractors, generating an additional revenue stream and strengthening our relationship with them," says Fox.

By investing in the latest Destiny Wireless Solution Pen and FileMaker Pro, APS is functioning far more efficiently, with obvious cost saving benefits, improved customer service, and the creation of an additional revenue stream.

About FileMaker Inc.

FileMaker Pro is used by millions of individuals and workgroups around the world to be more productive and efficient. Business, education and government customers rely on FileMaker Pro to manage people, projects, images, assets and other information. In addition to being the number one-selling easy-to-use database software, the award-winning FileMaker Pro product line also includes low-cost Applications that automate basic business tasks, ready-to-use Starter Solutions, and tools to create and share solutions from the desktop to the web. FileMaker Inc. is a subsidiary of Apple Computer, Inc..