



Streamlining & Automating Property Management Processes

Overview

■ Challenge

To automate fax delivery of maintenance repair requests so that they are received by the contractor within minutes of the residents phone call

To enable maintenance requests to be back-tracked more easily

Link document images to their business management system

To create an online repository for all outgoing & incoming business documents.

Link document images to Orchard ArcHouse

■ Scope

19,000 maintenance requests per month
48,000 residents in 24,000 properties
650 Southern Housing users

■ Key Benefits:

Faster repair service for residents
- emergency requests are met within 24 hours

Reduced costs

Contractors receive clearly printed instructions in a timely fashion

Has met Government efficiency targets

Eliminates laborious tasks releasing staff to concentrate on customer service

■ Solution

Castelle FaxPress

AutoFORM Output Management

■ Why AutoFORM?

Recommended for AMS Castelle FaxPress
Proven integration with Orchard ArcHouse
Speed of search & retrieval



Overview

Document Management Specialists AMS has implemented a more automated way to speed up the way Southern Housing Group residents maintenance and repair orders are dispatched to contractors.

The solution is based on the integration of AutoFORM Output Management and Castelle FaxPress technologies with Southern Housing Group's established Orchard arcHouse housing management system. The solution enables the Group to efficiently handle up to 19,000 monthly requests from 48,000 residents in 24,000 properties.

Replacing a former manual process, the new system from AMS allows repair orders to be instantly faxed or e-mailed to contractors, or remotely printed out in their offices. It enables the association to more accurately track progress of repairs and more efficiently store documents for future easy access—without the risk of lost or misplaced files.

A key element in the project's success has been the ease of integration with the Group's existing housing management system.

The Result

The result is an improved, faster service to residents and reduced cost and resource expenditure by Southern Housing Group. Contractors receive instructions more clearly and in a timely fashion that helps them better schedule the work and residents get their repairs and maintenance handled more quickly. It has also enabled the Group to meet and even exceed the Government's latest efficiency improvement targets.

Contractors now receive instructions in a timely fashion that helps them better schedule the work – and residents get their repairs and maintenance handled more quickly.

Output & Document Management

The customer

Southern Housing Group is one of southern England's largest housing associations. Founded over 100 years ago, they own and manage 24,000 homes with more than 48,000 residents, employ 900 people and work with over 70 local authorities.

The business need

"With over 24,000 properties, we have a very busy maintenance and repair schedule," says Southern Housing Group Head of IT Jan Swanwick. "More than £25 million a year is spent on the maintenance and improvement of our properties, in addition to the work done under our current £550 million housing building programme".

19,000 maintenance requests per month

"Typically, our call centre receives over 19,000 calls a month, of which a high proportion are maintenance & repair requests. This means literally hundreds of individual service provision transactions a day and thousands of orders placed on the various contractors we use to carry out the work. A further complication is having to prioritise jobs according to urgency: typically, 24 hours for emergencies, seven days, or a month for less important tasks".

"Historically, we had used fax to issue work orders to contractors. It proved to be low cost, simple to use and everyone had a fax," says Swanwick. "However, as we grew – what was efficient for, say, a few hundred orders a month, had rapidly become extremely inefficient for thousands. "

"Our previous system printed out the orders and then, four times a day, these would be collected from the printing station and taken to a fax. Many had several pages and these would have to be laid out on a table, collated, and faxed one at a time. It was virtually a full time job for someone". "It was also very slow – often taking several hours for the order to move from the printer, to the fax and then to the contractor. If, as a result, it missed a particular contractor's cut-off deadline for work scheduled the following day, then it would miss our 24 hour response commitment for an emergency call. The old system encouraged haste, which often resulted in mistakes; orders were faxed to wrong numbers, mis-collated, or lost. Backtracking to check it was sent meant trawling through mountains of paper.

AMS Recommends Castelle FaxPress with AutoFORM

"The delays were particularly frustrating because we knew that the technology to provide a far more efficient solution existed. Essentially, we wanted an automated fax system that was reliable and proven to work with our Orchard MIS system. It also had to be capable of handling other in-bound and outbound fax tasks for up to 650 'hotdesk' users across the company, although only 400 would be using it at a time.

More Functionality

"We also wanted greater functionality. For example, the previous solution couldn't handle automated routing, email or manage fax queues. When more than one fax came through at a time, the system failed. We looked at a variety of options but AMS stood out as being the best turnkey solution provider".

The benefits

AMS proposed and implemented a solution based on AutoFORM from EFS Technology and Castelle FaxPress Premier. AutoFORM is a fully integrated suite of output document and processing management technologies. AutoFORM provides the ability to use the Castelle e-mail and network fax server to automatically email and fax the high volumes of maintenance requests, invoices and other time critical business documents—without operator intervention. For example, if a contractor prefers maintenance requests by fax, but remittance advices by post, AutoFORM can organise this automatically document-by-document.

Automation

"Now, instead of having to print out the work orders and manually faxing them one-by-one, the task is completely automated. Work orders can be faxed, e-mailed or remotely printed in a contractor's office – depending on their preferences. It has drastically reduced the amount of time taken to generate and send the orders, and means that contractors have more time to schedule their work," says Swanwick. "We can also keep a better check on orders sent, store the details more securely and access them more easily".

Meeting Government Efficiency Targets

"In the current climate where the Government has a very strong efficiency agenda in which all processes have to be reviewed and challenged, the AMS solution helped us deliver the efficiency targets asked of us – and saved the cost of half a full-time job that had previously been committed to the now redundant manual process".

Reliable

"AutoFORM provides a more efficient, professional way of working. It has improved our relationship with contractors and our image with suppliers – and has improved our service to residents. It is easy to use and is completely transparent to our users. The enhanced printing and document management functionality means we can change logos and illustrations on document quickly and easily. We have one of those wonderful solutions you put on a rack in a cupboard, plug in and forget. You can't ask for more than that!"

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