

## HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL PUTS CUSTOMER SERVICE AT THE HEART OF ITS BUSINESS

SOFTWARE AG TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATES BUSINESS SYSTEMS TO THE FRONT-OFFICE, WHILE LINKING UP THIRD PARTIES SYSTEMS FOR A MORE EFFICIENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

### The challenge

Hinckley & Bosworth had to meet Electronic Government targets including a Countywide A-Z, Public Access to on-line reports, electronic payments and self service forms which involved making over 900 services available to the public electronically. They also had to guarantee that they had only one phone number that customers could call with questions and queries.

Having met the challenges and targets in the front-office, the Project team sat down to look at how to introduce these changes into the back-office to make processes more efficient including environmental health, revenues, benefits and planning. Behind the scenes, due to the disparate nature of services and business systems, there was much duplication of effort, information and processes, taking place.

"We needed to find a sustainable solution to be able to link existing systems and customer information more effectively," said Paul Langham, IT manager at Hinckley & Bosworth. "We could either drive changes through our CRM or our silo route. We decided to focus on our customer database, and make the technology implementation a business-driven action rather than technical one."



The Borough of Hinckley & Bosworth covers the southwest corner of Leicestershire, located in the centre of England between Leicester, Birmingham and Coventry.

The Council serves approximately 100,000 inhabitants over 16 wards with 34 elected councillors and is one of seven Local Authorities in Leicestershire which operate within a two tier system, where responsibilities are divided between the Local Authority and Leicestershire County Council. The Borough Council administers a wide range of services, and works in partnership with many other agencies.

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"We anticipate that there will be long term cost savings on customer service in the front-office, including reduction in expenditure on data entry," said Langham. "While cost savings are valuable, our main focus is on improving customer services. Staff can now spend more time attending to individual requests or carrying out customer satisfaction surveys. This further improves customer relations and achieves what we set out to do, namely put customer services at the heart of our activity."



### The solution

Hinckley & Bosworth had worked with Software AG in the past, and had used previous versions of the Integrated Services Framework (ISF) for several years as a limited workflow application. Two years ago, Software AG proposed a solution to expand the Council's use of ISF to include a complete Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, however due to resource constraints this was not adopted.

In 2006, a change in corporate strategy led to the CRM project being re-energised, with a "Customer First" project team instigated to deliver the new Customer Service vision.

In 2007 Langham evaluated Software AG's updated proposal against alternative vendor solutions. With other Local Authorities backing Software AG, as well as their own experience with the company, the Strategic Leadership Board at Hinckley & Bosworth chose Software AG over other vendors.

"We previously had to access individual systems separately when trying to process a request from a customer," said Langham. "Our users had to be trained across a range of systems including Caps Uniform, Academy Revs and Bens, Software AG ISF, E-Payments and manual diaries. These included new systems we took on from third parties when we won a tender, to link our information with them. This

meant that we had high training overheads to ensure our staff were able to use all systems and staff time wasn't being used effectively."

"Our vision was for a user to be able to access one system, which would pull out the information required from various sources, without the user having to move to another computer," he continued. "We researched how our customers contact us, and tried to predict how they would like us to contact them in the future. This included integrating SMS with email, using e-forms and providing self-services, by identifying our top 200 services with users. We needed to provide all these aspects while retaining a single user interface for the front office and researched existing technology to integrate. We needed as much integration as possible with our back-end systems."

Software AG's Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) technology met Hinckley & Bosworth's requirements. This was proven by hands-on demonstrations of the ISF / webMethods Service Orchestrator technology, in a Proof Of Concept tailored to customer requirements.

"Software AG downloaded the technology onto a laptop for me to take away and trial and I was very impressed," said Langham. "The technology also opened our eyes to additional possibilities of working with third parties (such as other authorities or suppliers) and how we can

determine how we would integrate with their systems."

The technology was easy to roll out to users (implemented in ten days) and cost-effective. The solution has proven to be successful, however this success has been supported by commitment from the IT team. "As with any major IT development, it needs a certain level of dedication from the team," said Langham. "We were lucky in having top-level support from the management team, who backed us in our upgrade. In a team of three, it's up to us and our staff to make the most of the technology."

### The results

By integrating systems using SOA technology, Hinckley & Bosworth no longer has data silos sitting in different systems. It can instead rely on the correct information to be extracted automatically. All customer contact is managed by the new system in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

All business-to-business contact is handled by the system, as the technology integrates with the corporate information store. This includes document management, such as geographical management system and the Local Land & Property Gazetteer.

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### GOING FORWARD

The first stage of implementation was completed in 6 months. There are another two phases to the 18-month project, with a plan to integrate multiple service systems. Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council will be integrating their CRM database with the business systems of Environmental Health and Revenues and Benefits.

"The technology is affordable and a great investment, as it opens up opportunities for us," concluded Langham. "This creates great potential in what we can achieve in a modern council, but needs to be realised in working closely on the project, both ourselves, and with Software AG."