

Alliance Data

Improving Profits with a Leading Platform for Document Creation

Alliance Data is a leading provider of transaction services, credit services and marketing services, managing over 105 million consumer relationships for some of North America's most successful companies. The company creates and manages customized solutions that change consumer behavior and enable its clients to build stronger, mutually beneficial relationships with their customers. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, Alliance Data employs approximately 8,000 associates at more than 40 locations worldwide.

Alliance Data purchased The Mail Box located in Dallas, Texas in 2001. The Mail Box was known for its ability to offer clients a veritable one-stop shop for cost-effective solutions in direct marketing. When the company purchased The Mail Box, it not only brought on board one of the largest single-site print and mail companies in America, but it also acquired one of the market's most advanced enterprise document creation solutions—Exstream Software's Dialogue™.



Alliance Data uses Dialogue to create responses ranging from one to 47 pages for as many as 184 different types of documents each day.

WHERE IT BEGAN

"The original reason The Mail Box purchased Dialogue was because we needed a solution that could handle a Child Support communications project for a government agency. The project involved a variety of output, including litigation documents and letters from clients and attorneys," said David Horton, director of business systems for Alliance Data Mail Services. "It was possible that 184 different types of documents required responses daily, ranging from one to forty-seven pages each. It was very complicated from a management standpoint, and yet with Dialogue, we had it under control in less than six weeks. Needless to say, we were very pleased."

Dialogue's ability to handle complicated document creation with ease was noticed by the new company's management. Alliance Data attributes its dramatic growth in part to helping its clients better understand the benefits of leveraging customer data to build stronger, more loyal relationships with their customers through more personalized communications. So once the Child Support project was underway in the Mail Services Group, there were two other business groups in line to reap the benefits of Dialogue—Utility Services and Retail Services.

REAPING THE BENEFITS ACROSS THE ENTERPRISE

Alliance Data Utility Services provides integrated services for millions of utility customers in the regulated, deregulated, municipal and sub-metering markets. Providing outsourced billing and customer care solutions and mail services, Alliance Data delivers value to utility providers in many ways, including reduced operations costs, improved customer care, and scalability without major capital investment. Burdened with multiple products to accomplish its document creation needs, the division was looking for a change.

"Utility Services wanted an easier and more cost-effective way to support their customers," said Horton. "They saw right away that Dialogue was more flexible and would allow them to offer more when it came to billing and customer care. Since using Dialogue, Utility Services has been able to offer better solutions for meeting their business process outsourcing needs. For example, they can incorporate variable graphics into utility statements and other communications to make them more relevant, attractive, and easier to read. Additionally, clients can deliver communications to their customers through multiple channels, including email and the web. Dialogue also makes it possible to provide intelligent inserting and commingling of mail, saving money on postage and ensuring that the mail enters the postal stream faster. All of these benefits are extremely important to an industry as regulated as utilities."

The next division to integrate the software was Alliance Data Retail Services. Replacing their legacy mainframe software used to generate new account and collection letters for its retail partners, the division is now reaping many benefits by using Dialogue to develop and deploy these now fully personalized communications. Migrating 11,000,000 customer communications to Dialogue was accomplished in just under three months.

"In retail, it's all about the customer. It's about understanding what they want and why they buy. It's critical to communicate relevantly with the right message, and with Dialogue we can offer that," said Horton. "Dialogue allows us to customize communications that meet the unique needs of each retailer and its customers. An additional benefit is the cost savings Retail Services has experienced. Because they didn't have to upgrade the previous software to accomplish what they wanted, they achieved significant savings. Another great benefit is a shared one. Since we are all using the same software now, we can re-use document application components—making it easier for our clients to offer their customers documents that are more consistent and coordinated."



THINGS ARE BUSY IN MAIL SERVICES

"We have moved virtually everything to Dialogue," stated Horton. "It has given us a great deal of flexibility. The Mail Services business is split between First-Class transactional documents and Standard-Class direct marketing mail. With direct mail, time is of the essence so the processing speed of Dialogue is a huge benefit. Dialogue makes it possible for us to put together a product very quickly and provide customers a sample for approval."

"When it comes to transactional documents, Dialogue's flexibility truly comes into play. We can easily process our client's XML data input files, offer them the ability to create personalized messages through a web portal for dynamic incorporation into documents at run time, and provide access to their statements and invoices online. Because Dialogue generates a PDF version of the output, they can see how each invoice looks and approve it for print or pull out anything they don't want to print."

Alliance Data is also taking advantage of the software's regulatory compliance capabilities to offer a telecommunications customer operating in several states the ability to do variable marketing promotions depending on the demographics of each market, while ensuring they are meeting regulatory requirements for the individual states.

EXSTREAM SATISFACTION

"Making sure you have it right the first time is more important than anything today with all the emphasis on customer experience," sums up Horton. "Exstream is a company that is very easy to work with. They understand our business and know where the industry is going. The greatest thing for us is that a lot of the things our customers are asking for, Dialogue can already do. It is that cutting-edge."

