



Overview

Country or Region: United Kingdom

Industry: Insurance

Customer Profile

Provident Insurance is a top 20 motor insurer in the U.K., offering a range of motor insurance products through a broker network, motor dealers, a call centre, Web sites, and price comparison sites.

Business Situation

In 2000, Provident Insurance was using a slow and unwieldy business and claims processing system that was expensive to maintain, and affected productivity and profitability.

Solution

Provident Insurance implemented RDT Landscape.NET, an insurance administration system built on Microsoft SQL Server, Windows Server, Microsoft Visual Studio Team System, and the Microsoft .NET Framework.

Benefits

- Efficiency gains
- Greater accuracy of information
- Improved customer service
- Easier compliance with industry regulations
- Increased developer productivity

Insurance Company Increases Profit and Productivity with Administration System

"The productivity improvements delivered by this development have led to significant savings for the business."

Mike Buck, Chief Information Officer, Provident Insurance

After 17 years of using the same software, Provident Insurance switched to an industry-specific application built on Microsoft SQL Server and developed by Microsoft Gold Certified Partner RDT. Provident Insurance worked with RDT to further customise the solution and build an infrastructure that would integrate all data management needs into one system. When it launched, Provident Insurance saw immediate results, increasing productivity, adding opportunities for new business, and selling services online for the first time. These benefits—along with greater accuracy of pricing—have delivered significant savings for the business. Now, Provident Insurance uses in-house developers to maintain and update the system more quickly than before, using the Microsoft Visual Studio Team System 2008 integrated tool set for database design and testing of applications.



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Situation

Founded in 1966, Provident Insurance is a leading provider of motor vehicle insurance in the United Kingdom (U.K.). The company, based in Halifax, Yorkshire, looks after the needs of around 500,000 policy holders. Provident Insurance sells motor insurance through a network of brokers.

In 2000, Provident Insurance had been using the same business processing system for 17 years. Created in a programming language that is no longer in use, it was expensive to maintain and almost impossible to change. Claims were entered into the system manually, so processing was slow and unwieldy. Customer service representatives were unable to access the information they needed to provide high-quality support. The system was often incompatible with the technology used by the company's main distributors, a network of more than 1,000 independent brokers, who operate on a number of different systems.

This hindered the company's ability to expand because it was difficult to implement changes to its IT infrastructure. As a result, Provident Insurance had been reluctant to add any products to its business in five years.

It was clear that a new policy administration solution was needed. Because of the highly-regulated nature of the insurance business, management had to invest time in undertaking a detailed evaluation of next steps.

Solution

After spending several years reviewing more than 50 different systems, Provident Insurance decided to work with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner

RDT, developers of the insurance industry solution Landscape.NET. RDT originally built its Landscape solution on Microsoft SQL Server 2005 and Windows Server 2003. Today, the system is based on Microsoft .NET, runs on SQL Server 2008 and Windows Server 2008, and uses the Microsoft Visual Studio Team System 2008 integrated toolset for database design and application testing.

Landscape had already been developed for the insurance industry, so 80 per cent of the features needed were already there. Provident Insurance partnered with RDT to develop the remaining 20 per cent for a solution customised to the company's specific needs. Mike Buck, Chief Information Officer of Provident Insurance, says: “Our primary role was analysis and specification—the role of RDT was software development and unit testing. We were also responsible for system and acceptance testing.”

Development started in 2002 in four phases. The system was tested every four to six months at the end of each phase. Mark Bates, Chief Executive Officer of RDT, says: “We spent a lot of time defining exactly what was needed. The following six to seven months were spent on development. Including the test cycle, the entire development project took 18 months.”

The completed data warehouse contains live databases, covering millions of policies. A series of dashboards show users real-time information on policy volume and key performance indicators for product lines and individual brokers.

When development was complete, RDT gave a copy of the source code to Provident Insurance so in-house developers could continue to maintain

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and modify the system. “We couldn’t take on this responsibility without Visual Studio Team System 2008,” says Buck. “It streamlines programming and testing by simplifying code editing and debugging.” This proved useful during one of the company’s latest ventures. Provident Insurance entered an arrangement with General Motors UK to sell insurance online under its Vauxhall, Saab, and Chevrolet brands. “Online sales are critical in motor insurance and were a key element of the relationship with General Motors,” says Buck. “We extended our Landscape system to include multiple branded quote-and-buy motor insurance Web sites, the sales call centre, and full integration with price comparison sites in just nine months. There’s no way we could have provided this service without the RDT Landscape solution.”

Benefits

After using the same system for 17 years, managers at Provident Insurance expected that it would take some time before the new data infrastructure had any impact on the business. However, their expectations were exceeded as productivity immediately increased. Additional products were added, errors reduced, and standards of customer service improved throughout the business.

Productivity Doubled as Soon as Landscape was Launched

The automation made possible with the new system showed instant results, with productivity doubling in the customer service area. Ninety five per cent of data is automatically loaded into the system and processed. “Motor insurance transactions can be complex,” says Buck. “Typically, 50 to 70 interconnected fields need to be filled out for each transaction

and multiple versions of the data and multiple accounting perspectives add to the complexity. Removing the need for manual processes resulted in huge time savings.”

New Products and More Accurate Information

Within months of implementing Landscape, Provident Insurance launched three new products: a niche product targeted at motor home owners, a new product for people over the age of 30, and a pilot venture in Ireland.

The SQL Server data management software displays vital business information to managers on easy-to-read dashboards that categorise information about sales and profitability by product and distribution channel. Managers can spot and take actions on the weaker channels and encourage those that are most profitable.

Single Point of Contact Improves Customer Service

No matter how a policy is entered into the system, all information is gathered and sent to the rating engine, which produces all the documents needed. Information is treated the same, regardless of how it came into the system—electronically from a broker, manually from an on-site customer service representative, or automatically through a Web site. As soon as the information enters the system, it is automatically replicated in all the relevant databases.

“This puts us ahead of a lot of other insurance companies because data is up to date all the time,” says Buck. “When customers ring up, employees have immediate access to all the information they need to provide the best service

“Recently the government varied the tax rate for insurance in Ireland. We just changed the rules of the product and were instantly compliant.”

Mike Buck, Chief Information Officer, Provident Insurance

possible.” Employees can see a snapshot of the policy at any moment in time. They can see all of that customer’s history, which risks were covered, and any correspondence that was sent or received.

Legal Compliance Instantly Available

A single point of change also helps ensure that all policies adhere to government regulations and the legal wording of policies. All of the terms and conditions are controlled by the insurer within the rating engine. For example, if someone is under 25, different terms may apply compared with someone who is older. Similarly, if there are any changes in legislation, once the system has been updated, these changes are automatically reflected in the documentation that goes out to the customer. “It’s really quick and easy for anyone using the system. Recently, the government varied the tax rate for insurance in Ireland. We just changed the rules of the product and were instantly compliant,” says Buck.

The increased level of automation is fundamental in meeting targets set for providing timely information to the Motor Insurers Bureau. In the U.K., insurance companies are legally bound to provide the bureau with information about all motor insurance products so the police and other authorities can check that motorists have valid cover for their vehicles. This information needs to be available within seven days. These strict deadlines for reporting information would be challenging, if not impossible, without an automated system.

Developers Work Smarter with New Tools

Visual Studio Team System 2008 speeds production time by giving programmers

better control. This is especially important for independent software vendors such as RDT that need to meet strict deadlines for clients. “Visual Studio Team System 2008 integrates seamlessly with our testing environment, and our developers are now much more productive and can change things more quickly,” says Bates. “This is better for all our customers. It’s also good for us. We’re doing more development per head of staff now than previously.”

Bates sees this increase in productivity as a way to recession-proof his company. “We’ve seen more activity in the past two to three months than ever before,” he says. “The way insurance is being sold is changing rapidly. Insurance companies need to build new products and expand their routes to market. If their systems are not particularly good, it’s really difficult to take on business from different channels. Landscape, in combination with SQL Server, can help solve this problem.”

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to:

www.microsoft.com

For more information about RDT products and services, call (44) 173 222 0010 or visit the Web site at:

www.rdt.co.uk

For more information about Provident Insurance products and services, call (44) 1422 331 166 or visit the Web site at:

www.providentinsurance.co.uk

Microsoft Server Product Portfolio

For more information about the Microsoft server product portfolio, go to:

www.microsoft.com/servers/default.aspx

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