

Making direct mail greener and smarter



Product

AbiliTec

Sector

Marketing

Customer

Direct Marketing Association



By relying on Acxiom to manage its Mailing Preference Service, the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) can focus on its other activities confident that queries are handled quickly. Recent improvements have cut costs by 30% and allow daily updates, giving members and users more accurate data and providing a faster service to consumers.

Besides advancing the interests of its 900 corporate members and the direct marketing industry as a whole, the DMA maintains the industry's successful self-regulatory framework. This, in part, is achieved by the DMA working to secure political and consumer faith in the value of direct marketing.

Central to this effort is the Mailing Preference Service (MPS), which enables registering consumers to opt out from receiving direct mail. MPS also contributes to the DMA's policy to minimise direct mail's negative impact on the environment. "The government wants effective initiatives that cut waste. So if a householder opts out, then MPS makes sure marketers don't waste paper by mailing them," explains Mike Lordan, the DMA's Chief of Operations.

With 4.4 million names and addresses, managing MPS is a serious matter. And because opt-out services are compulsory for industry members, there's no room for error.

Experience, understanding and serious software

Given its broad remit, it's surprising to find that the DMA has just 50 employees. But it also has Acxiom, which has managed MPS since the Association was formed in 1992. Acxiom checks new registrations for accuracy and removes duplications before making it available to licensed users. And, whenever asked, Acxiom produces extra reports and analysis to help Mike reply to specific enquiries, leaving his own staff free to deal with consumer complaints.

"We rely on the people at Acxiom," says Mike. "They understand the issues we face, their IT is state of the art and they've proven over the years that they're very flexible and responsive. Our partnership with Acxiom has supported us very well."

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Mike Lordan, Chief of Operations, The Direct Marketing Association

The challenge

Retaining the integrity of a well-respected direct mail opt-out service while making it greener, cheaper and easier to use.

Our response


Continuous improvement to the service by streamlining processes through advanced software and delivering outstanding customer service.

The impact

Costs reduced by 30%, new revenue streams identified and a service that's now updated every day, giving users more accurate information and a quicker end to unwanted direct mail.

What next?

Both Acxiom and the DMA, Europe's largest professional body of its type, are well placed to meet the challenges of any future changes affecting the direct mail industry.



John Mitchison, Account Manager at Acxiom, explains how. "We've worked with the DMA for so long that we understand every detail of MPS. And in-house, we've developed incredible technology, AbiliTec, which matches names and addresses with unprecedented accuracy. It goes a long way to making MPS as robust as it is." So robust, in fact, that while the database has grown by almost 40% since 2007, complaints have fallen.

Cutting costs through continuous improvement

AbiliTec is a highly sophisticated software solution that recognises individuals even when they move house, get married or change their name. Using it helps Acxiom ensure that MPS is always 100% accurate, so that all who register for the service can be confident that their details will go on file.

Nonetheless, in a difficult economy it's important for Acxiom to keep costs kept for the DMA. "Continuously improving what we give the DMA has always been essential," says John. "Last year, for example, we revamped the service to automate a large part of the process to make it run even more smoothly."

This work was key to Acxiom's success in retaining the contract in 2009, says John. "By going back to first principles, we cut costs by around 30%. And we suggested ideas to help the DMA increase revenue, benefit the industry and offer consumers more choice."

New improvements to benefit all

The first of these ideas is already being implemented – updating MPS daily, rather than monthly. "Licensees can now download the latest file just before launching a campaign," says Mike. "And consumers registering for MPS should now stop getting direct mail in weeks, not months as before."

He's equally enthusiastic about another innovation – creating a new revenue stream by admitting selective advertising on the MPS website: "Acxiom brought the idea to life and it's certainly something we'd like to do, perhaps inviting the Central Office of Information to become a sponsor."

The next step – consumer choice?

The next big challenge is selective opt-outs, so consumers can choose which direct mail to receive. "It's incredibly difficult" says Mike. "If you don't want financial services mail, do you include Tesco in that, given that they're a bank as well as a retailer? There's lots of different issues to deal with."

John agrees – "it's complicated" – but remains confident: "As we've shown over the years, our solution is very adaptable to this kind of change. With the technology we've got and the experience we have, we can take all this on."

So it seems this partnership still has lots to offer. "This is a long term relationship," says Mike. "Acxiom help organisations like ours by bringing in flexible technology, reinforced by high levels of customer service. We're very happy with them."

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Want to know more?

If you'd like to discover how AbiliTec and other Acxiom products can help you use your databases more effectively, download our presentations at www.acxiom.co.uk

Alternatively, call us on 0800 035 2755 to talk to one of our Account Managers. They'll be happy to set up a meeting or answer any questions you may have.