

Case Study

Cardiff and Inpute Delivers Automated Document Capture Solution to An Post

About An Post

An Post is one of Ireland's best known organisations and provides a wide range of services including postal, communication, retail and money transmission. It is one of the country's largest companies directly employing over 9,600 people through its national network of retail, processing and delivery centres.

The Challenge

An Post's parcel delivery division had a requirement to process POD (proof of delivery) cards for its customers. When a customer required a signature to confirm that an item had been delivered, the customer service department would take the details and rummage through boxes in storerooms to find the original POD card and then fax it back to the customer.

This was a labour intensive and slow process and lacked the efficiency of service that An Post was trying to extend to its customers. With that in mind the company decided to invest in an imaging solution.

The Solution

After reviewing many potential vendors, An Post selected Inpute Technologies to implement a POD solution.

According to Damian O'Toole, IT manager, mail, An Post, "We were one of the first to introduce a document imaging system for our POD signatures."

When an item is delivered by An Post and a signature is required, the postman peels a barcode from the item and attaches this to a POD card. The recipient then signs the POD card confirming delivery. The bar code contains a 'track and trace' number which is a unique number to identify and track the item through all stages of the delivery process. Each card is designed to contain up to 10 deliveries.



An Post's POD system is based on Cardiff® TeleForm™, part of Cardiff's Intelligent Documents solution to scan, capture and validate details contained on the POD card while Captaris Alchemy is used to store and retrieve POD images.

Each evening the PODs are returned to the GPO where they are scanned using TeleForm software. The system reads the barcodes, stores the POD image in the Alchemy imaging database and updates An Post's track and trace system to confirm that a signature is available for the particular delivery.

The system automatically processes over 80% of POD cards. There are occasions where a bar code may be torn or damaged or where the track and trace number may have been handwritten onto the POD card. In these cases the system automatically flags these defective transactions for verification and correction by a customer service agent.

The system has been enhanced and expanded over the past number of years. One such expansion was the capture and storage of electronic signatures obtained from personal digital assistants (PDAs). For certain services in major urban areas, An Post uses PDAs to confirm parcel deliveries. Electronic POD signatures are transmitted instantaneously to head office when a delivery is made. The Inpute system creates an image of the signature and associates the track and trace numbers with the transaction. The electronic signatures are also stored in Alchemy imaging database. There are approximately 140,000 cards processed each month and the system now contains over eight million images indexed by over 35 million track and trace numbers.

Customer at a Glance

An Post

Industry: Distribution

Challenge: Organisation processes over 140,000 proof of delivery (POD) cards each month for parcel and registered mail services.

Inpute client since 1997

Solution: Cardiff TeleForm, Alchemy Content, Management Server, RightFAX and Inpute Document Viewer

Results:

- Streamline POD capture and validation process resulting in reduction in time and cost to capture and index POD cards
- Improved customer service as POD cards can be quickly and easily retrieved by An Post customer service agents or by clients via An Post's website
- Scalable and robust solution meeting the increased POD capture requirements of An Post and 7 x 24hr retrieval requirements of An Post customers
- Flexible solution that can and is being used to address additional An Post intelligent document capture requirements

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—Damian O'Toole, IT Manager,
Mail, An Post

Requests for a POD signature are made through An Post's customer services team or via the web. Customer service agents retrieve POD images by entering the track and trace number on a web based enquiry application. This system allows An Post to email or fax the relevant signature image to the customer. "Since we've installed that system we've enhanced the service. For example you can now track the item on our web site yourself and submit a retrieval request via the web site so you don't even have to contact customer service anymore. All you need to do is input the reference number and you'll see the full tracking history of the package on the site and a request for signature can be on your desk within minutes," said O'Toole.

Benefits of the System for An Post

The imaging system chosen by An Post has enhanced the company's customer service and promoted better workplace efficiencies. "We're quite a large labour intensive organisation, the imaging has taken that element away from certain departments," said O'Toole. "It's improving customer service and that's really what we're trying to do. With this system we've started to drive the customer to be able to fulfil their own service delivery vis-à-vis requesting signatures using our web site. It means we can take the manual aspect out of the process all the time."

Evolving Relationship

In addition to using the system to capture parcel PODs, An Post has expanded the system to capture registered mail PODs. An Post also used the TeleForm and Alchemy platforms to amalgamate its accounts and tracking system to bill customers for its services. This allows the customer to see exactly what it has spent and where it has spent it. With Special Savings incentive Accounts now maturing, An Post uses TeleForm auto merge publisher feature to generate the SSIA maturity form and the associated Revenue declaration form. Once issued and returned completed by the SSIA account holders, the forms are scanned, the data extracted and validated using a combination of TeleForm's ICR, OMR and bar code recognition functionality

The Future

Having worked with Inpute on a number of projects An Post plans to go back to them again. "We've a lot of forms we're looking at such as the redirection form for people who want their post sent to a new address when they move, so we might possibly be redesigning that to be system friendly. We're always looking at different projects and we get numerous requests each year from various departments for it. It's only now that the local managers are seeing what the technology can do for them," said O'Toole.

About our VAR

Inpute

Inpute Technologies specialises in document capture, records management and workflow solutions. Based in Dublin Ireland, the company has been implementing and supporting Teleform based solutions since 1996. Inpute has developed a wide range of applications for organisations in both the public and private sectors. More information on Inpute can be found on their website; www.inpute.com

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