

Case study: Harcourt Education

QAS Pro Web streamlines
the order process



Harcourt Education

Harcourt Education is a leading school and further education publisher with brands that include Heinemann, Rigby, Ginn and Payne Gallway. A member of the Reed Elsevier group of companies, the company currently has operations in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.



“We needed a customer-friendly, easy to install web solution that could support our growing online purchases and produce address details in a standard format.”

Ian Cavey
E-learning & Online Manager
Harcourt Education

Situation

The customer website is a growing part of the Harcourt Education business, with 50,000 credit card customers to date, including teachers, students and parents. In total, the company processes nearly 10,000 orders a year for books and education materials online. Whilst this is a great medium for Harcourt to capture customer sales, the process of taking and completing an order can sometimes be a headache for the company.

Occasionally, automatic order processing could fail and some deliveries were sent to the wrong address, or never sent at all. As a result of failed deliveries, customer services staff had to re-enter orders manually, leading to extended delivery times, customer dissatisfaction and more alarmingly, an increase in the cost of a sale.

Ian Cavey, E-learning and Online Manager at Harcourt Education, estimated that as many as 10 per cent of the orders taken online contained incorrect contact details. This meant that over 1,000 orders a year, with a total sales value of over £100,000

were at risk. This also put increasing pressure on staff and pushed up the cost of sale for every order.

Solution

To reduce contact data inaccuracy and improve deliveries and overall customer service, Harcourt Education required a solution that guaranteed absolute accuracy.

In June 2005, Harcourt Education implemented QAS Pro Web, an award-winning online data capture solution. QAS Pro Web brings together Experian QAS' experience of rapid contact data capture and web service technologies, ensuring the integrity of customer data. The implementation took just two days and was expected to produce dramatic results.

Ian Cavey comments: “Life before Experian QAS was all about trying to decipher customer addresses that had been inputted incorrectly. For us, this was effectively pouring money down the drain by re-delivering items that should have reached customers first time round. Now that the QAS product is up and running, we expect the current 10 per cent level of inaccurate contact data to drop to

“Not only has it reduced our costs, but it also means that staff can focus on taking orders and boosting customer satisfaction.”

Ian Cavey
E-learning & Online Manager
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zero. The format of the website has been changed so that it is virtually impossible for customers to enter their details incorrectly.”

The implementation of QAS Pro Web will make Harcourt Education's customer website really simple to use. It offers just two fields for customers to enter their address details – their premise number and postcode.

Powered by QAS Pro Web, which uses an enhanced version of the Royal Mail Postcode Address File, the website returns a full address for the customer to validate. These details then transfer automatically to Harcourt's purchase and distribution system in a customised layout, ensuring accurate data is used consistently throughout the organisation.

Timely processing of information and delivery of the final product is critical for Harcourt to ensure that its brand is recognised as a trusted supplier of quality higher education books. Experian QAS' data management products help companies capture the right data and keep it correct through time. Harcourt recognised the importance of capturing accurate data through its growing web channel to improve customer service and the bottom line.

Cavey concludes on why he chose Experian QAS: “We selected QAS Pro Web because it is a high quality product that comes with high quality support. Other businesses within the Reed Elsevier group have worked with Experian QAS and were very positive about the company and its products. Since selecting QAS Pro Web, it has won an industry award because of its superior functionality over other contact data management products in the market. We are very satisfied with our choice of data accuracy supplier.”

Results

Since the implementation of QAS Pro Web, Harcourt Education has achieved excellent results. QAS Pro Web ensures that the website is easy for customers to use, but also maintains that orders are processed in the quickest time possible and goods are delivered promptly to customers.

Benefits are not just limited to cost savings for Harcourt Education; the Data Protection Act requires companies holding information on customers to ensure the information is accurate and up to date.

A reduction in incorrect address formats will have a dramatic effect in bringing down the costs in reprocessing deliveries. Previously, over £100,000 of orders were not processed correctly first time. Now this is rectified, money will no longer be spent on re-mailing items. Harcourt Education also estimated that up to one working week a year was spent dealing with these issues, which cost money in terms of resource to resolve problems. Now sales support staff are able to focus on taking accurate customer orders 100 per cent of the time.

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