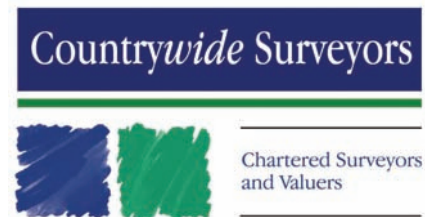




TeleWare Case Study



The decision by Countrywide Surveyors to replace its voice dictation system with a solution from TeleWare formed a key part of an on-going IT strategy that aims to increase productivity, improve the quality of service and contain costs

After each survey and valuation is completed, a report is dictated by the surveyor, usually via a mobile phone immediately following the survey, and typed up by staff within one of three secretarial support units (SSUs) located at Milton Keynes, Kettering and Liverpool. The surveyor then reviews the report before it is electronically signed and despatched to the client. The company's target service level requires a three-day turnaround from receipt of a request to the despatch of the surveyor's report. Job allocation, transcription and distribution are carried out through the company's workflow management system.

Why We Choose TeleWare

According to Bill Ashworth, Countrywide Surveyors' Head of IT, "The current dictation system had become unreliable, was difficult to maintain and lacked the flexibility required to maximise business efficiency. There had also been some reported loss of dictation following broken telephone connections which can happen when calling from a mobile phone. A further problem occurred if there was a pause during dictation as this could cause a 'sonic boom' when the recording was later replayed.

We evaluated three potential replacement systems but the TeleWare solution was far superior in terms of the features supported and the flexibility it gives us. Prior to making our final selection we had a brain-storming session with one of TeleWare's technical staff. He came up with a solution that was brilliant in its simplicity and gave us just what we needed."

A division of Countrywide Assured plc, Countrywide Surveyors is one of Europe's premier surveying and valuation practices. It is the largest residential survey business in the UK and operates from 140 locations nationally. Other group companies cover mortgaging, insurance, estate agency and conveyancing.

In 2002, the Countrywide Assured group of companies:

- Completed 558,212 valuations and survey instructions
- Arranged 48,982 mortgages valued at £3.9 billion
- Completed on 34,777 conveyancing transactions
- Handled 93,442 house sales
- Arranged 49,662 life protection policies
- Arranged 50,969 general insurance policies

Countrywide Surveyors employs around 1300 staff, including 600 qualified surveyors and valuers and are appointed valuers to virtually all the major UK lenders. They conducted some 560,000 surveys in 2002.

Martyn Stones, Operations Director added, "The fact that some 16,000 UK staff at PricewaterhouseCoopers have been a TeleWare customer for a number of years reassured us of the system's reliability and scalability. We also saw that our competitors and major customer were also using TeleWare and that gave us an added comfort feeling. The introduction of new technology and new ways of working can present all kind of challenges as staff adapt to the changes. However, in the case of the TeleWare system, their implementation and training staff worked closely with us to ensure the phased roll out went as smoothly as possible."

Dictating a Report

Upon dialling into the Dictation System, a surveyor's ID is automatically assumed from the phone's CLI (Calling Line Identity) but can be entered manually if not dialling in from their 'usual' phone. Before commencing their dictation, surveyors can be played announcements recorded by the system administrator. These might be used to notify surveyors of any important issues and internal news items.

A report can be dictated in one call, with pauses in dictation as required. Alternatively, a partially dictated report can be 'parked' in the system for completion by the surveyor during a subsequent call. An intuitive user interface with voice prompts guides the user and provides confirmation of call status.

Load Sharing – a Major Benefit

Each team of typists within a support unit will generally handle transcriptions for the same group of surveyors and will become experienced at recognising their accent and style. However, one of the key advantages of the TeleWare solution is the flexibility it affords in terms of load sharing. If a particular team is overstretched whilst another has spare capacity, jobs can be easily reallocated, either within the same SSU or to another SSU, in order to maximise efficiency and reduce turnaround times.

This was put to the test immediately after installation of the TeleWare system. Bill Ashworth explains, "Just prior to the TeleWare system going live, our old dictation system at Liverpool went down. This created a serious backlog of work within that area. However, with the new TeleWare system up and running it was a very simple matter to reallocate some of those jobs to our other two SSUs in order to minimise delays in turnaround. This is something we'd not been able to do prior to installing the TeleWare solution and is a major benefit for us as it allows us to smooth variations in demand for our services across the UK."

Outlook Integration

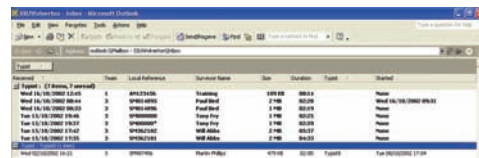
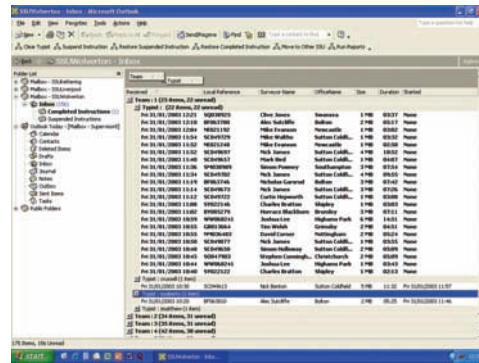
A key factor in the power and versatility of TeleWare's solution is its integration with Microsoft Outlook, Countrywide Surveyors' preferred email environment. For each completed dictation, the TeleWare system generates an email with the report held as an attached sound file. The ability to add customised fields within Outlook to hold specific items of information is also utilised. Before despatching the email to the surveyor's default SSU, the TeleWare system populates custom fields within the email defining various attributes of the report, including:

- Surveyor's Name
- Job Reference Number
- Office location code
- SSU Team Number



Using standard features within Outlook, these fields enable transcription jobs to be easily picked up by one of the secretarial team that normally handles that surveyor's work. By sorting against selected fields within their Outlook inbox, supervisors can very simply check work-in-progress and reallocate work either within an SSU or to one of the other two SSUs where workload dictates in order to optimise performance.

Upon opening an email, the typist locates the appropriate record within the workflow management system. By double clicking on the email attachment the dictated report is then played through their headset and the typist completes the transcription.



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