RAISING THE STANDARD

How Optima created a database, tablet application and reporting solution to help a leading high street bank transform branch compliance and reduce operating costs.

Data **Insight** **Campaigns** **Reporting**

Around two years ago, Optima Connect was charged with transforming the branch audit process of one of the UK's leading high street banks. The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), formerly known as the FSA, had started fining banks (up to £1.5million) for failing to provide their customers with up-to-date information on current financial regulations and our client was intent on avoiding both the financial penalty as well as the reputational damage caused to a sector desperately trying to recover from the banking crisis of 2008.

A QUESTION OF TRUST
As well as looking to avoid reputational damage, the bank was keen to increase the level of trust in the audit process internally. The existing model used a complex web of spreadsheets to track and record in-branch compliance across marketing, corporate and regulatory collateral. This manual process resulted in poor data entry and with questions over data quality and integrity the client was keen to implement an alternative dynamic solution that provided a robust and reliable source of information that all users could trust.

A MORE ROBUST TRACEABLE PROCESS
As a consequence, the following were the client's key requirements:

- To provide a definitive record of every marketing area and position by branch.
- To streamline and automate the branch audit process to record, evidence and report compliance by branch.
- To create a reporting capability that provides transparent and reliable metrics for different business users.
- To provide robust data to enable print production and distribution at a branch level.

Delivery against these requirements would transform existing processes and directly impact over 2,200 branches.

WHAT OPTIMA DELIVERED
Optima developed a cloud-hosted solution with databases, web services and image storage accessed via a bespoke tablet application. The solution involved splitting the process into two stages with the application being used by externally appointed auditors.

Firstly, each branch was surveyed to record the different marketing positions available; from external windows to banking hall and meeting rooms. Each area was photographed with all images retained on the central database. Secondly, regular audits would be carried out to record, evidence and report compliance with branch merchandising guidelines.

The app would be used by auditors to carry out the initial survey. Thereafter regular audits would occur ensuring that each branch is reviewed quarterly with updates to marketing positions being recorded, as necessary. Each time a branch is refurbished it is also re-surveyed to record the new marketing positions. Auditor training was also carried out by Optima and audit teams were supported throughout the survey and audit process.

Optima also created a bespoke reporting portal. The portal provides near real time dashboards of the audit progress and in-depth reporting at auditor level to track performance. Reports on compliance at brand, regional, directorate, branch and marketing area levels are available.

From a security perspective, databases are locked down by IP address, OAuth authentication of web services is carried out over SSL, two factor authentication is implemented for access to the virtual machines infrastructure and a delegated security provider controls access to the reporting portal.

Overall, the new automated solution has recorded and retained the different marketing areas and service positions across a network of 2,200 branches evidenced by almost 3,000 images. The database also stores 3,500 campaign images. To date, the regular audits have recorded 28,000 images of non-compliance including 18,500 images of broken or unidentified marketing positions. A drill-down feature also means non-compliance can be reviewed at divisional, region and branch level.

BENEFITS REALISED BY THE CUSTOMER
Optima's complete and automated solution has provided the client with a more robust and reliable survey and audit process. This has delivered increased operational control and improved visibility of processes and compliance across the branch network; all of which means that standards of presentation and compliance have been improved.

The new reporting dashboards have provided metrics and measured KPIs allowing trends to be recognised and any remedial action to be taken such as additional auditor training. In addition, the client can also monitor the progress of audits and the individual performance of auditors leading to improved productivity and lower costs.

The project is also expected to generate over £150,000 of print cost savings through 2016/2017. This will be the result of 'graded-distribution' where only the required material is produced and delivered to each branch.

Finally, our client has not only noticed an increased level of trust in the audit process across the organisation but has also avoided any fines from the FSCS as they are able to identify any compliance breaches quickly and ensure they are rectified as soon as possible.

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