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+44 345 094 0945
www.waterstons.com

Case study



Sector Housing & Social Care
Service Bespoke Software

Apr 2021

Becoming Outrageously Brilliant

A key part of Home Group's offering is ensuring that maintenance work happens proactively and to a high standard. The more you think about this, the more the challenge becomes clear... Managing information flow with contractors. Managing bookings in real-time while the customer is on the phone. Home Group customers demand – and deserve – reliability and reassurance

Results at a glance

- A bespoke digital scheduling solution integrated with Home Group's core housing management software
- Improved contractor onboarding efficiency
- Flexible and scalable digital solution for future benefits realisation

Home Group are determinedly pursuing their aspiration to be outrageously brilliant. They're always seeking to help their customers and clients to 'open doors to new opportunities and healthy lives.' Sounds amazing, doesn't it? Home Group provide vital, reliable housing services. So, by providing their tenants with a high-quality home and a safe place to live, they really are changing lives. And we're proud to be a part of that.

We began working with Home Group and five of their maintenance contractors to deliver a digital solution to help with real-time data sharing. From partnering with those stakeholders, we discovered that the customer's first phone call was the key touchpoint. Our solution would need to keep contractors' diaries perfectly updated and in-sync, so that Home Group could reliably assign the right job to the right contractor – all during that first phone call.

The Solution

Realising that real-time data exchange was a central component, we designed and delivered a middleware platform to provide business-to-business software integration. This underpinned the real-time contractor scheduling solution. It also gave huge reassurance to Home Group's customers, because detailed progress updates could be given for any job.

And having built a solid middleware platform, Home Group's customer service advisors were provided with a bespoke digital scheduling solution – all integrated with their core housing management software.

Perhaps it's hard to make middleware sound exciting, but the benefits are really wide-ranging:

- Providing a generic interface giving control of the details passing back and forth between Home Group and contractors' systems.
- Greatly accelerating the rate at which contractors can be onboarded into Home Group systems; adding new contractors simply requires a new 'adapter' adding to the platform
- Ensuring a highly available solution with resilience built into the hardware and software solution
- Giving flexibility to realise their business processes using digital technology that is easily adapted and extended as business needs change
- Establishing a platform with features that can be exploited in the future to allow even greater value to be realised

The Challenges

Lots of solutions use middleware in their architecture, and it's something we're very used to. But the challenge with Home Group was the sheer sophistication of the business operation. There are relationships between many different organisations, people, contractors... And some of them had their own third-party software providers who had their own technical needs too. With so many organisations involved in the end-to-end solution, we focused on careful orchestration and planning. This is a human problem, as much as a technical one. We made sure nobody was left-out or forgotten.

With such comprehensive business rules to implement, we also made sure that end-to-end testing was done with each contractor. After all, who knows their tasks better than the people who are doing them? Quality expectations had been defined at the start of the project, so this was evaluated carefully too. All against a backdrop of a hugely diverse range of technologies used by different contractors, and the commercial agreements with their software providers.

We ensured that throughout its duration the project was viewed holistically. Every component of the interface needed to work for the project to be successful, and for Home Group and their contractors to achieve the outcomes they were looking for. And, most importantly from Home Group's customers, to 'open doors to new opportunities and healthy lives.'

"The work Waterstons has done is enabling us to deliver an enhanced customer experience. It is providing us with valuable insights which are, in turn, helping us to work with our maintenance partners in continually improving the services we deliver together. Waterstons were instrumental in the delivery of the project, working in partnership with us to co-ordinate efforts across all of our maintenance partners. They ensured the implementation of a quality solution, driving the project through to completion."

David Redpath
Director of IS