

Case study: WaterAid

WaterAid cleans data to
fight poverty



WaterAid

WaterAid is an international charity dedicated to helping people escape poverty and disease. Established in 1981 as a leading non-governmental organisation (NGO), WaterAid strives to provide safe domestic water, sanitation and hygiene education to the world's poorest people. The charity operates in 17 countries, with 132 employees in the UK, and many overseas partner organisations.



“We estimate that WaterAid raises an additional £12,000 appeal income each year because of more accurate data on our contacts. We achieve this using Experian QAS software.”

Dan Lockeretz
Database Manager
WaterAid

Situation

WaterAid has over 450,000 names and addresses on its database. Establishing and maintaining correct contact details is crucial to ensuring that WaterAid maximises fundraising and helps improve the lives of those suffering from poor water sanitation throughout the world. There are two key communications that require complete accuracy of data:

- ‘Fundraising asks’ (requests for donations), which are mailed approximately four times each year, often to more than 60,000 contacts a time
- Mailing of Oasis, the charity's supporter magazine, which is sent to over 130,000 contacts twice a year

With such a large database, WaterAid recognised that not all its mailings were reaching their intended destination. The charity's database of 450,000 contacts contained both inaccurate and incomplete records which resulted in over 5,000 returned pieces of mail each year.

“We were using an external third party to handle our donations,” says Dan Lockeretz, Database Manager at WaterAid. “This meant that vital data was captured outside of the business and then imported into the charity's database. As a result, we were not reaching all the people we needed to.”

In particular, Oasis, WaterAid's 20-page supporter magazine, is a vital tool for WaterAid to establish and build its relationship with supporters. With streams of data entering the WaterAid database, the charity required a solution that could provide a holistic view of all information, and ensure that data was validated before being imported.

How does Experian QAS help?

“We chose Experian QAS for two main reasons,” adds Dan Lockeretz. “First, using Experian QAS software means we can contact our supporters in the way they want to be addressed – there are no mistakes or errors when we mail our database. Second, we already

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“Experian QAS has been an integral partner of ours, helping us to understand the importance of data integrity and enabling us to get closer to our supporters by providing a better and more prompt service.”

Dan Lockeretz
Database Manager
WaterAid

had an excellent experience of working with Experian QAS when using its software for front-end data capture to validate addresses and eradicate errors.”

In early 2005, WaterAid implemented QAS Batch to help clean and maintain data. QAS Batch is a data cleaning and suppression solution that cleans inaccuracies in existing databases and puts the information into a consistent format. It is particularly useful for the charity's direct marketing campaigns as it cleans and verifies addresses against Experian QAS' enhanced version of Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF). QAS Batch is used up to ten times a week, prior to every import of data from different channels. This enables WaterAid to clean and maintain its customer database on an ongoing basis.

Dan Lockeretz continues: “Trying to keep our data accurate over time is a constant challenge. As the details of both individuals and organisations change, the smooth and hassle-free implementation of QAS Batch means that we can prevent data decay and ensure there is no duplication of data.”

Results

WaterAid has realised both financial and operational benefits. “With QAS Batch, WaterAid can now clean its historical data,” says Rebecca Clayton, Marketing Director at Experian QAS. “The Batch module rationalises existing entries, updates out-of-date addresses and flags records which cannot be verified.” In particular, WaterAid has achieved two key benefits:

Staying in touch with supporters

WaterAid has seen an increased number of supporters responding to ‘fundraising asks’ as a result of more accurate data. The charity estimates that it raises an additional £12,000 appeal income each year from an

increase in the accurate delivery of both appeals and Oasis magazine. In addition £1,000 is saved each year from a reduction in the amount of returned mail.

“Before implementing QAS Batch, our mail was being returned due to incomplete or incorrect addresses,” says Dan Lockeretz. “Now our data is accurate, we have very little returned mail and we avoid sending duplicate mail. Above all, using Experian QAS software has increased our ability to stay in touch with our supporters.”

Improved efficiencies in data processing

WaterAid adds approximately 3,500 contacts to its database each month. The implementation of QAS Batch has increased the speed of data import by 30 per cent. This helps free up approximately 20 days labour a year, resulting in significant time and cost savings.

Dan Lockeretz comments: “We have been a customer of Experian QAS for 10 years and in this time we have seen dramatic changes not only in the way customer data is viewed, but also in how it is managed.”

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