



PORTAL TECHNOLOGY

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Portaltech deliver 1st class web services to Royal Mail Group

Meeting the Demands of the 21st Century



For over three and a half centuries, Royal Mail has been at the hub of our nation's postal services. Royal Mail Group currently has annual sales in excess of £8 billion and some 195,000 employees. Through its three core businesses - Post Office®, Royal Mail and Parcelforce Worldwide - Royal Mail collects, sorts and delivers 83 million items to 27 million addresses each working day, serves 28 million customers a week in its 15,000-strong network of Post Office® branches and delivers around 40 million express parcels every year.

Key to the success of Royal Mail's operations is its ability to stay one step ahead of customer demands and the constantly evolving progress in technology and communications. Never has this been more critical than in today's marketplace where technological advances can often exceed the supplier's ability to keep pace. In addressing the need to meet these challenges head-on, Royal Mail has drawn heavily on the architectural design skills and technological vision of Portal Technology Systems Ltd. (Portaltech).

Portaltech provides the Group with sophisticated, scalable architectural solutions to help implement their core web 'portal', as well as revising the content management architecture of Royal Mail, Post Office® and Parcelforce Worldwide.

Challenges and Opportunities

Royal Mail is continually reinventing its business to meet the changing needs of customers and the demands of increasing competition: this includes their portal technology. Royal Mail has been using the software technology ATG since 1999, seen as best of breed in the portal arena.

Royal Mail's first portal went live in 2001 covering all parts of its business. Over time, it has evolved to meet the changing needs of the different parts of the organisation and the wide range of products and services it offers - Royal Mail, for example, was focusing more on B2B services and Post Office was looking to enter the financial services market.

To meet these needs, the architecture needed to be more versatile and scalable to meet rapidly increasing usage. Royal Mail's e-business team consequently put forward a business case in early summer 2003, to review the site.

Portaltech completed a technology audit that clearly identified the principal issues with the existing implementation, such as extensibility, scalability and robustness. They then proposed a logical and innovative way forward for Royal Mail that was instrumental to the redesign project and would address all of the previous challenges.

Portaltech is engaged constantly in an advisory capacity to Royal Mail Group. Many of the projects Portaltech work on, such as building new applications, have to go through a formal, competitive procurement process.

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Client Satisfaction

Dennis Greene, Head of E-business, Royal Mail Group, commented: "Portaltech have been great partners for us over the past three years and have brought a wealth of knowledge to our consumer portal projects. We regard them very highly".

"Portaltech make me feel valued and they take time out to listen to my business needs. I've been very happy with the recent Intranet consultancy work and I expect this to be a relationship that lasts a long time," added Gareth Locke, Head of IS Strategy and Design, Royal Mail Group's E-business division.

Sophisticated Solutions

Portaltech fundamentally replaced Royal Mail's content delivery model: it built an architecture for the organisation that was content-driven, to facilitate the growth of all areas of the business but also to give it economies of scale. Separate business units would need to share components of the portal and systems architecture, whilst at the same time being able to develop their own ways of dealing with their customers.

The key challenge for Portaltech was to design a flexible content management architecture that would allow the three separate core units to develop their own business strategies, while making sure that products and services still related to each other.

Portaltech worked hard to design and integrate the new architecture, ensuring that quality procedures and standards were introduced and enforced every step of the way. They also used their wealth of experience in ATG to mentor the rest of the development teams. By January 2004, the architecture model was complete, followed by approximately two months of 'bedding in' and testing.

Innovation Breeds Success

Portaltech played a large part in helping to create a highly sophisticated portal architecture solution for Royal Mail, which acts as a very solid and reliable framework for the future. Web traffic has trebled since 2001, with a huge increase in the volume of transactions. Royal Mail's sites currently serve more than 30 million page views a month, numbers which continue to grow.

The real measures are commercial and Royal Mail Group's e-channel is considered successful in supporting its products and services and providing information to customers. E-business, incorporating portal technology, remains very important to Royal Mail strategically and will continue to generate large volumes of traffic and revenue.

Facing the Future

As the UK mail market will be fully open to competition from January 2006, the e-channel and its accompanying technology are crucial and have a key part to play in Royal Mail's future.

Since the completion of the architecture project, Portaltech continues to be heavily involved with the Royal Mail Group as E-business and content web-based projects are always evolving and in need of regular reviews.