

# DIRECT WINES

## Case Study

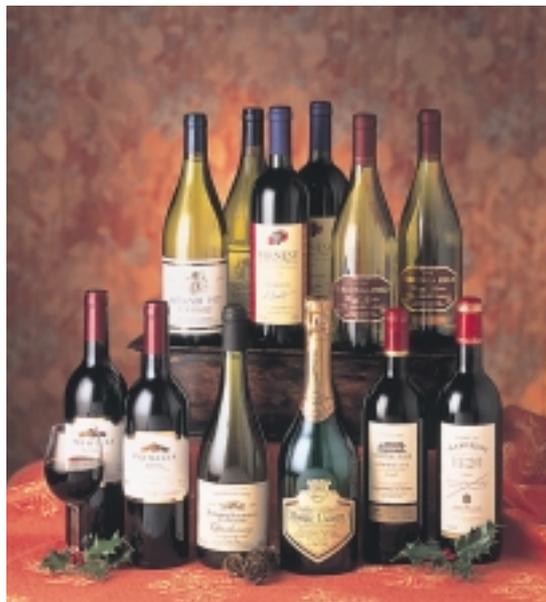
Direct Wines is the largest operator of wine clubs in the world. Since being launched in 1969, the company's sales had grown to £154 million by 2001. It is behind well known wine club brands like The Sunday Times Wine Club and Laithwaites (formerly known as Bordeaux Direct) as well as programmes for British Airways, Barclaycard, Air Miles and NatWest.

Direct Wines has over 600,000 customers currently buying at least once every six months, making their relationship with their customers key to business success. The application chosen to run its call centre and order processing is a customer management solution from Graham Technology (GT-X).

### Accurate Address Data

Direct Wines has delivered over 36 million bottles of wine throughout the UK in the last 12 months.

Laid end to end they would stretch from Theale to Chile! So, it's easy to see that accurate address data is critical to the company. The customer's address is matched to a delivery address which can be recognised by their courier's own systems. On the despatch document a barcode tells the courier where the cases need to be sent. Barcodes are optically read at the distribution hub, which automatically assigns each order to the right destination centre. Accurate delivery depends on correct addressing.



### Identifying callers

QAS' QuickAddress Pro is an integral part of the Direct Wines application. The first question which callers are asked is their customer number, if they already belong to a wine club, or their postcode, if they are a new customer. The operator then enters the postcode and the house name or number and the full address is returned.



"We have always had a need for being able to find addresses and postcodes. The reason is speed and accuracy," says Tina Rickett, Call Centre Manager at Direct Wines. "It may take some time for an operator to enter the full address manually. That can introduce errors which mean the customer never gets a delivery." She notes that using QuickAddress as an integral part of the call centre software speeds up order taking and improves accuracy. "From the operator's point of view, they do not notice anything different. They are unaware that they are shifting from one application to another," says Rickett. From the caller's point of view, there is no longer any need to give the full postal address, which makes the call quicker. So confident is the company about the low error rate produced by the new system that it hopes to be able to significantly reduce errors in its customer data.

### **Customer data**

Accurate data is also important for the extensive direct mail activity carried out to support the wine clubs. Direct Wines generates 14 different campaigns throughout the year, producing around 3.5 million items of direct mail in total. The customer database is a prime corporate asset, being used across the business, from stock managers and the finance department, to marketing and customer services. The link between customer data and the courier companies' records is also vital. One service Direct Wines offers is order tracking, telling a customer where a case of wine is if it has not yet arrived. That means records have to match accurately, not least because many customers send wine as a gift to friends and relatives.

Direct Wines is a prime example of how a successful mail order business can thrive based on a good idea, combined with customer service, efficiency and accuracy. Supporting its expansion has been the right quality of software and address management applications.



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