

Web data extraction / data integration for small business

CASE HIGHLIGHTS

Profiled Organization: SME Customer Service, Inc.

Challenge: To accurately retrieve data on past due accounts from client website and transfer to/update Excel spreadsheet for collections agency.

Solution: Automation Anywhere runs different batch files of varying length - from minutes to hours - daily and weekly to capture up-to-date information about past due accounts.

Benefits: Despite a sudden spike in his debt collections business, Scott Downs has been able to cope with up to 15 hours of extra work per week without additional hiring and still deliver his services with improved accuracy.

“Automation Anywhere easily saves me about three hours of manual data entry work per day, which translates into a very significant savings for a small business.”

- Scott Downs, CEO, SMECS

BACKGROUND

SME Customer Service, Inc. (SMECS) is an Oklahoma-based small business that offers debt and judgment collection services for large and small businesses and individuals. The company handles recurring collections for a fee, as well as contingency collections for a percentage. SMECS is considered an expert in skip tracing - the art of tracking down a “vanished” debtor - and currently specializes in serving companies that provide business and residential security systems.

The most crucial part of debt collecting is having accurate and up-to-date information on the past-due account or court judgment. Inaccuracies in the data, usually caused by human error, can lead to unpleasant consequences, such as the invasion of someone’s privacy or even unfair harassment of an innocent party. So, SMECS has to tread carefully when sending out collection letters and making phone calls - whether they are live calls or robocalls - to remain in compliance with the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.

THE COMPLEX ART OF COLLECTIONS

At the beginning of every week, small-business owner and CEO of SMECS, Scott Downs, receives reports on past due accounts—a.k.a. collection reports—from his clients. The information on the reports—such as account number, name of client, contact information, amount due, time past due—is manually entered into a spreadsheet. Downs then sets about calling or writing to the people on the list with priority given to the longest past due accounts.

But what if folks pay off all or part of their account between the time the company creates its collection reports and SMECS begins work on them? What if the account is paid after one letter or phone call from the collection agency? To avoid confusion and duplication of effort, the client companies post up-to-date data on past due accounts at a secure, password accessible website. It is Downs' responsibility to check the website daily and update his Excel spreadsheet.

Until July 2008, SMECS performed this tedious and time-consuming operation manually. Then the recession hit and suddenly the number of accounts jumped into the thousands. Downs realized that his small business would be in big trouble unless he found a better way to cope.

AUTOMATING THE NITTY GRITTY

At first, Downs thought of hiring extra hands to help him with the daily cut-and-paste routine. But he was acutely aware of the greater potential for human error. He knew he would be spending many hours every day double-checking the spreadsheets—not the most efficient use of his time. If only there was a way to automate the routine functions...

As most people do these days, Downs turned to the internet for a solution. A Google search brought up three potential candidates. Downs tried out sample versions of each of them and liked what he saw in Automation Anywhere. An email inquiry to Tethys Solutions in which he laid out his needs in detail brought a prompt and equally detailed response. Downs had found a solution to his problems.

But he had never spent so much on a software package before and he needed to be absolutely sure of the return on his investment. So he used all his investigative talents to run a background check on Automation Anywhere. "I was not able to find a single negative comment about the product!" he admits with a laugh.

LIKE TRADING A SHOVEL FOR A BACKHOE

Within days of installing Automation Anywhere, Downs knew he had made the right choice for his business. Not only was he able to cope with the increased number of weekly collection reports from his clients, he was actually spending less time daily on the routine functions.

Automatic Data Retrieval: The entire work week at SMECS hinges upon the accessibility and accuracy of the Excel spreadsheet which holds the individual account numbers and related information. With Automation Anywhere, most of the time, Downs only needs to enter the account number manually. The software can retrieve all of the related information—name, address, telephone number, amount due, time past due—from the company's website and update it as often as is necessary.

Multi-tasking Batch Files: One daily routine at SMECS is the update on the most crucial past dues. For this task Automation Anywhere uses three batch files to check the client's secure website. What used to take a couple of hours at least is now accomplished in under an hour on most days. Other batch files do an update on the entire list once a week.

"It feels like I've traded a shovel for a backhoe. With Automation Anywhere I can get so much more done in such little time. That's a real boon for a small business."

- Scott Downs, CEO, SMECS

EXTENDED USAGE FEATURES

What has Downs really excited about Automation Anywhere are all the “bonus features” he has discovered since he started using the software.

Back in the days when the economy was doing well and the collections business was not so hot, SMECS had diversified into the online sales business. Now he has discovered that he can use Automation Anywhere to gather product price information off the Web and do a comparison. What’s more, the software can take SMECS product listings from one site, such as e-Bay, and upload them to another, such as Amazon.

Yet another way that Automation Anywhere can help a small business save big on time, effort, and ultimately, money.

If you found this case study useful, we invite you to discover how Automation Anywhere can give your business an edge – visit www.AutomationAnywhere.com



PRODUCT INFORMATION: AUTOMATION ANYWHERE

Automation Anywhere is an intelligent automation software for business & IT tasks. No programming required. Enterprise license includes state of the art drag and drop automation, remote deployment, Visualizer, Workflow designer, image recognition and many more features. Free trial available. Read more about this product at <http://www.AutomationAnywhere.com> or call our sales hotline +1-888-484-3535.