AUTOMATION, INC.

A story about a service bureau that replaces their beloved, but antiquated and unreliable old data entry system with Viking Data Entry system and up-to-date hardware. Their costs are reduced and their productivity increases. The conversion comes in ahead of schedule and 50% below budget. They discover VDE® is 20 times faster than Oracle data entry. All this makes for a happy customer.

Automation's Data Services Group (DSG) is a data entry service bureau that handles subscription fulfillment, automated payroll, accounts receivable, accounts payable, general ledgers, inventories, mailing lists and much more with customized programs.

Founded in 1957, Automation is now part of AAA Nebraska, which acquired them for their considerable computer expertise.

The Problem

Too Much Down Time

Automation was using an Inforex key-to-disk system for data entry. They had taken very good care of the machine, which helped minimize their support needs, but the system was getting older and maintenance was starting to be a problem.

When Inforex reorganized their support staff, moving them to a regional office farther away, it became more of an issue.

"When we needed service, it would take four to six hours to get a technician to drive or fly in to fix the problem," said Karen Griger, DSG Manager for Automation. "That meant we would miss an entire shift. Turnaround time is a big issue for us. We couldn't afford to be down that long."

The Solution

Viking's VDE

Griger led Automation's search for a new data entry system. They looked at solutions from SCS and several other sources, checking each against a set of pre-defined criteria. VDE excelled in every area.

Portability: Automation needed a system that ran on a variety of Unix machines, as well as on PCs. VDE, which is available for an extensive range of platforms, offered them the flexibility they needed.

> *"I automated a lot of work that ate up operator time. As a result, our productivity has increased significantly."*

Ease of Use: With new clients and new jobs constantly coming on board, Griger knew she would be adding forms frequently. She was impressed with how quickly and easily she could build forms with VDE.

She also wanted a system that would be easy for their experienced operators to use. She liked VDE's ability to re-map the keyboard to a 029 layout with the over-punch option, as it would help ease the transition for their staff.

Operator Statistics: Griger monitors operator performance closely. She was pleased to discover that with VDE she could pull operator statistics five different ways.

Data Manipulation: Griger liked the way VDE allows you to key data in one way and then by simply rewriting a conversion definition file, retrieve it in several different ways for reports to different people.

> *"I took full advantage of the excellent support from Viking's Customer Care Group. Anytime I had a problem or a question, they were able to help."*

Convertability: VDE also has the ability to read files from another source into an existing Viking form through the conversion utility. During the conversion, Griger would be able to take data already keyed into

the Inforex system, import the files into VDE and verify them there. That would cut entry conversion time in half.

"Viking was the best fit," said Griger. "VDE met our needs on every point."

The Conversion

Faster and Easier than Expected

Automation handles a huge variety of jobs, including accounts receivable, accounts payable, payroll, mailing lists, inventories, reader response/bingo cards, surveys, and federal 1099/W-2 forms. All had to be converted to VDE.

Despite the complexity of the conversion, it was completed in less than half the time originally estimated.

"When I got VDE I read through the documentation and just started converting our data entry jobs," said Griger. "It was easier than I expected. The documentation was very straightforward and extremely helpful. The Viking Forms Painter is very easy to use."

"I took full advantage of the excellent support from Viking's Customer Care Group," added Griger. "Anytime I had a problem or a question, they were able to help. I can't say enough about the support from Viking."

Griger took advantage of VDE's capabilities to build-in extensive edits that reduced errors and allowed the operators to be more productive. She also programmed in some Form selection so operators wouldn't have to waste time deciding what Form to use next.

"I automated a lot of work that ate up operator time," said Griger. "As a result, our productivity has increased significantly."

A Story

VDE is 20x Faster Than Oracle Data Entry

"Time and again I've proved how fast and efficient VDE is," said Griger. "One time in particular, we had just started doing data entry for reader response. We were using an Oracle database and instead of using VDE, someone built a customized Oracle-based data entry front end for it. You had to enter the entire form and then wait while the information was loaded into the database. But as the database got larger, that pause grew longer and longer."

"I believed that I could set up something faster with VDE," she continued. "It took 15 minutes to create the data entry form and test it with a dummy batch of data. We timed the data entry and discovered that Viking was more than twenty times faster! Now we use VDE to handle reader response for more than ten magazines."

Summary

A Very Satisfied Customer

"We've been using VDE for almost ten years, and I'm even more pleased now than I was when we first implemented it," said Griger. "We look forward to their annual upgrades because they always have something that saves us time or money. We're a very satisfied customer."