

Food For the Poor Gains Efficiency With Fairfax Software's Check 21 Solution

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Benefits At a Glance

- Donations are deposited the same day they arrive in the mail.
- All keying is finished before the day is done.
- Incoming forms are imaged instead of being stored in boxes in a warehouse.
- The entire solution is provided by a single vendor – no finger pointing between vendors.
- Audits are quick and painless with no hunting through boxes for documents.
- Food For the Poor can create their own data-capture forms to support their promotional mail-outs.



Food For the Poor, home office on Lyons Road near Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Food For The Poor (FFP), the second-largest international relief organization in the United States (Chronicle of Philanthropy), realized significant processing efficiency improvement in 2007 from their implementation of Fairfax Imaging's Check 21 imaging solution.

Identifying Needs

In 2000, FFP's manual mail handling operation became too much to handle, especially during Christmas. FFP hired temporary help but still couldn't get the mail processed fast enough. FFP contracted with Wausau Financial Systems, Inc. to install a scanning system based on scanlines. Although FFP was happy with the Wausau system, they realized it was not meeting all of their needs. FFP is still using the NCR (NYSE:NCR) 7780 transport from that solution to process batch tickets for the new Fairfax Imaging, *Quick Modules* system.

FFP receives a wide variety of responses to its promotional mail-outs. These responses contain everything from name and address to prayer requests. (Prayer requests involve calling the requester and offering to pray with them. This is one of the unique and important services FFP performs. In addition to its importance to the donor, faithfully answering prayer requests encourages additional support in appreciation of FFP's personal service and concern.)

"Our efficiency has improved. For the first time we are finished keying before the end of the day. That's new," says Vickie Torregrossa, Director of Information Systems. "The efficiency of getting the money in the bank right away is an important item for Food For the Poor as well."

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FFP was not able to capture the responses that accompanied checks using the Wausau system. Anything that came in with a check was stored in boxes in a warehouse. Every time FFP was audited (once a year or more), they had to sort through all the replies in the warehouse to pull the things they needed for the audit. Storing those documents and having to go through them for each audit provided the motivation to upgrade their system.

Approach



Opex 3690i mail opener/scanners were chosen to process incoming donations

All incoming, donation related mail is opened and scanned using Opex mail openers. Images are processed through Fairfax Imaging's *Quick Modules* in a straightforward fashion. The most important data to capture is the check MICR and amount data (courtesy and legal amounts). For FFP, this must always be captured for all job profiles that contain checks.

Running on networked, clustered HP (NYSE:HPQ) servers, *Quick Modules* creates flat files in agreed-upon common directories that FFP's IBM (NYSE:IBM) iSeries system can access and read.

Quick Modules populates a local database with all the data and images needed to retrieve the data at any time downstream. The data include statistical and demographic, as well as amount and index values.

Prayer requests are scanned and saved during data capture. *Quick Modules* enables special users to retrieve these important requests on-line so that they

can call the donor and offer to pray with them. A flag is cleared by the special user when a prayer request is completed to prevent duplication.

Quick Modules Check 21 functionality processes check images and creates a 9.37 file for Wachovia Bank (NYSE:WB). Deposits can be made several times per day when volume makes it necessary.

Some special reports have been created for FFP to monitor Check 21 performance and ongoing deposit status.

FFP recently added *Quick Config*, another module of *Quick Modules* that enables FFP to create their own data capture forms. These are then incorporated into their promotional mail-outs.

"In Information Technology, you're always dealing with issues where you've got vendors pointing fingers at each other. Fairfax Software is a company that really could do everything we needed. A one-stop shop; I think that would be anyone's preference." – Vickie Torregrossa, Director of Information Systems.

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Return on Investment

FFP is still in its first year of transitioning to the system, so it's too early to tell if there has been a savings. In the long term, FFP can see that it *will* mean a savings for them, especially Check 21. More and more banks are embracing this method. During a TAWPI conference, FFP learned that although Check 21 wasn't the cheapest check-processing method yet, going forward, it was expected to become so. FFP is already saving money by going with Wachovia who worked with FFP toward a successful integration. FFP expects that savings to grow. Depositing money in the bank right away provides fiscal value as well.

Food For the Poor

Founded in 1982, FFP serves the poorest of the poor in 16 countries throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. FFP is an interdenominational ministry that not only provides food for the starving, but also builds sturdy houses for the destitute, digs water wells for parched villagers, provides medicine and medical equipment for the sick and elderly, supports orphanages and

"The error rate is really good. Out of 5000-8000 payment items, FFP gets maybe one MICR error."
– Jeffrey Alexander, Controller.

education for children, teaches communities to fish and provides them with continuing support, equipment, and much more. Each year, FFP builds thousands of homes and sends thousands of containers to the countries it serves.

Food For the Poor consistently receives top rankings from Charity Navigator and Ministry Watch, and a high efficiency level rating from Forbes. In addition, FFP is proud to meet the extensive efficiency standard of America's most experienced charity evaluator, the Better Business Bureau.

Fairfax Software

Headquartered in Tampa, Florida, Fairfax Software is a leading provider of forms and financial document processing solutions. Established in 1994 with offices in California, Illinois, Maryland, and Texas. Fairfax Software develops its own processing software, *Quick Modules*. *Quick Modules*, is a highly successful award winning forms and remittance processing solution. Currently *Quick Modules*' systems are processing millions of transactions per day; across many industries, both government and commercial.



Eddie Mustafa, Systems Manager, shows off the professional level of installation and cabling FFP has accomplished in their Computer Center

"Steve Chahal, one of the principles of Fairfax Software let us know that we were free to talk to any Fairfax customer concerning their satisfaction with the system, which we thought was important."
– Vickie Torregrossa, Director of Information Systems.