



Case study

Royal Mail Data Services and Infoshare

Great and small:

How large organisations can work successfully with SMEs

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A case study of Royal Mail Data Services and Infoshare.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which can have up to 250 employees, are the lifeblood of the British economy. The Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) estimates that these businesses will contribute £217 billion to the UK economy in the country's top 10 cities by 2020. This is despite the uncertainty created by Brexit.

During his time as UK Prime Minister, David Cameron was keen to advance the prospects for SMEs, which led to the creation of the SME Advisory Panel in 2010. The panel is made up of 24 entrepreneurs and leading business figures, who work to ensure that £1 of every £3 invested by the government in goods and services will go to SMEs by 2022, and also advises the government on the small-business agenda.

One of the 24 panel members is **Pamela Cook, Managing Director of Kingston-based Infoshare**, a UK-owned software company that works with organisations to create single views of people, objects, locations and account information. Cook is perfectly placed to explain the opportunities and challenges that SMEs face when working with large organisations, as Infoshare's clients include Royal Mail, Barclays and BUPA.

"The biggest challenge for SMEs looking to work with large organisations is finding the opportunities," **Cook** says. "SMEs often struggle to find large organisations that will take them seriously. Often, this reticence is caused by risk aversion; large organisations are more comfortable working with similar-sized companies, which means they can miss out on the potential benefits of collaborating with innovative, flexible, accessible SMEs."

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How Royal Mail and Infoshare came together

Infoshare has been working with Royal Mail Data Services for more than two years, helping the company create a single view of its customer based on Royal Mail Data Services' extensive data set. Infoshare's ClearCore technology cleanses, enriches and matches data from disparate sources and brings it together into a single view.

Infoshare was introduced to Royal Mail Data Services via another department within Royal Mail, which demonstrates the value of internal networking and collaboration to both SMEs and their larger customers.

"We wanted to create data accuracy as part of our service, because data degrades at least one-third every year, with all the implications that has for data security and governance," explains **Jim Conning, Managing Director of Royal Mail Data Services**. "No one else in the market had the flexible technology that Infoshare's ClearCore provided us. This was an innovative SME producing exactly what we needed."

As well as the technology Infoshare provides and the potential for Royal Mail Data Services to create a truly unique and stand-out offering based on it, there are other reasons that Royal Mail is prepared to work with SMEs such as Infoshare.

"While the key provision is our innovation, there is also a huge price advantage working with SMEs, as well as significant flexibility," **Cook** explains. "In addition, the client enjoys direct and immediate access to its account team, something a larger organisation may not guarantee. These considerations all have to be balanced out against the risk the large-organisation customer is ready to take, so it was important we had staff on board who had worked with large organisations before."

According to Conning, Infoshare won the contract because its team was made up of specialists in a very niche field. "They're very knowledgeable and very good at doing what they do," he says. "They bring a real focus with proven tech to allow us to get to market far more quickly and with a far more developed product than if it had been managed in-house."

The challenge to deliver

Infoshare had never worked with a client the size of Royal Mail before, so the company had to consider how it would resource its new customer. This did not prove to be an issue, because with its first project for Royal Mail Data Services, Infoshare was both on time and on budget. Its technology now underpins Royal Mail Data Services' essential General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) projects.

So how can SMEs such as Infoshare, which are nimble and flexible, work with large organisations such as Royal Mail, with multiple layers and stakeholders? For Conning, it all comes down to communication.

"You need to agree a standard and have a programme that's open and welcome working alongside SMEs to help them innovate," he says. "Once you do, make sure you don't force corporate beliefs on them. The reason they are successful is because they work as they do."

Conning adds that it's essential that both large organisations and their SME suppliers and partners understand each other's cultures and what's required to make their work together a success.

"Absolutely listen to both sides," he advises. "As with any project, there will be tough times, but too many projects fail because of communication breakdown."

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How to get noticed by large organisations

One of the aims of the SME Advisory Panel is to challenge the concerns of bigger organisations surrounding SMEs and work to tackle a number of myths that do not reflect the reality of procuring and working with SMEs.

Getting noticed in the first place is one of the key challenges SMEs face. Cook says that gaining access through partners and individual recommendations is absolutely essential. Infoshare could demonstrate that it had worked with large organisations previously, which helped when meeting with Royal Mail's IT decision-makers.

"My advice to SMEs would be don't even think about working with a large organisation unless you can deliver," **Cook** adds. "Also, make sure you are never over-reliant on one major client – that could really leave your company exposed, should they leave."

Through its relationship with Infoshare, Royal Mail has demonstrated its commitment to working with all suppliers, big or small, nationally or locally. **Infoshare's sales director, Richard Onslow**, concludes: "Royal Mail's decision to back UK SME innovation proved to be a good one; with successful delivery of internal data programmes and underpinning future data products."

About Infoshare

Infoshare's intuitive software profiles, cleanses and matches data held in single or multiple databases to build single views of people, organisations, objects and locations. Detailed audit trails provide evidence of the quality and accuracy of data and the matches made. Infoshare enables organisations to transform data into a strategic corporate asset, to increase revenue, assess risk, control costs, detect fraud, comply with regulations and to spot troubled families or children at risk.

www.infoshare-is.com

Contact or connect with us to find out more, or to see how we could help you

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