

# COMPLEX DATA ACCESS FOR ASSURANCE FIRM

## *Customer Case Study*



### At a Glance

#### Company: PMAS

**Over 170,000 police officers and their families depend on PMAS for their savings, investments, mortgages, pensions, insurance and other financial services.**

#### Objective

To improve customer service within the constraints of ever-changing market demands, stiff regulatory frameworks and financial limitations—by investing in new product development, IT technology and people.

#### Solution

The IT Group used AIS to move from Adabas on OpenVMS and terminal-based applications to the Windows environment. Users can view member data, maintain medical histories, review performance, transfer data from Adabas to a new system and handle premium payment problems.

*"It was necessary for us to focus on developing new solutions rather than on how Visual Basic and COM objects interact with Adabas or OpenVMS. Attunity Connect made this a non-issue. When you're developing against a tight deadline, the more help you can find, the better."*

**Derek Eaton**  
**Systems Development**  
**Manager**  
**Police Mutual Assurance**  
**Society Limited (PMAS)**

## ***Police Mutual Assurance Society Improves Customer Service with Attunity Integration Suite***

Because Attunity Integration Suite (AIS) handles the Police Mutual Assurance Society's (PMAS) most complex requirements for Adabas access, it is an ideal solution for new systems that either replace older, inefficient processes or deliver capabilities not previously available. PMAS is using AIS to integrate the OpenVMS Adabas database with both intranet and Windows-based applications. The systems enable users to view member data, maintain medical histories, generate and review reports on the company's performance, transfer data from Adabas to a new finance system, and handle premium payment problems.

"We were looking for an evolution of what we've got rather than a revolution. We wanted to give our Adabas system life in the future, building on what we have and expanding it." Begins Derek Eaton System Development Manager of PMAS. Over 170,000 of Britain's finest police officers and their families depend on PMAS for their savings, investments, mortgages, pensions, insurance and other financial services. PMAS has taken care of the financial welfare of generations of people involved in law enforcement since 1922.

As a leader in the industry, PMAS realizes how vital it is to reach members effectively, offering a broad range of products and services. At the same time, the company must meet ever-changing market demands, stiff regulatory frameworks and a bottom-line mandate for prudent financial management. The organization is using AIS to achieve these goals.

### **Merging Legacy Systems with Modern Technology**

A strategic review in 2001 reinforced the need for PMAS to invest in new product development, IT technology and people. At that time, PMAS' customer-facing departments were still using green-screen technology. All data resided in Adabas on OpenVMS. While this method was robust and simple to use, PMAS recognized the need to move to the flexible infrastructure and software development tools available in the Windows environment.

There were many reasons not to port to an entirely new system. First and foremost, the existing structures worked. Second, they were completely tailored to serve the police family, with support for ranks, member segmentation, pay schedules, police numbers and other specifics. Finally, there were significant drawbacks to any new products. "Sales reps were trying to sell us the latest CRM, eCommerce, eBusiness, and B2B products, just as they had concentrated on selling us data warehousing, data mining and data marts in the past." Eaton continues, "Many of those packages were overkill; they included an assortment of features we simply wouldn't use. They were on a different scale, supporting 65 million members vs. 650,000, say."

The IT department began looking for a way to reuse its legacy data and replace its terminal-based applications with a Windows desktop solution. The challenge was to do it simply and efficiently – while still making the most of their limited IT resources, reusing legacy systems, capitalizing on the knowledge and skills of the users and ensuring that the total cost of ownership did not increase management expense, a key metric for PMAS.

### **Finding the Right Glue**

It made the most sense to incorporate a Windows front end and a middle tier for data access. At that point, PMAS had been using Software AG's Natural software to develop Windows applications. However, Eaton recommended a move to Visual Studio, which provides a number of mature tools for programming and managing the development environment. That decided, the group began looking at middleware. Given tight IT resources, Eaton proposed buying a product rather than building one in house.

PMAS reviewed the available options and at that point, brought in Attunity for evaluation. Eaton recalls, "Attunity exceeded our expectations. They were accessing and modifying data within a couple of hours of their arrival. We could see straight away that we'd found what we wanted."

## Benefits

- Allows PMAS to “run the company faster with fewer people to do the same jobs,” according to Eaton.
- Enables the IT group to achieve results quickly, to introduce new products faster and to improve customer service.
- Gives PMAS a comprehensive picture of the business thanks to simultaneous access to different aspects of the same information.
- Makes the most of existing IT resources by reusing legacy systems and capitalizing on the staff’s skill sets.

*“Attunity delivered on their initial promise of simple connectivity and ongoing administration is minimal so the total cost of ownership (TCO) is really low. As a result, we can focus on creating added value for our members while keeping management expenses within guidelines. In good times, this is good business practice. With financial pressures on the insurance industry today, it is essential.”*

**Derek Eaton**  
Systems Manager  
Police Mutual Assurance  
Society Limited (PMAS)

## CONTACT ATTUNITY

**North America**  
T: +1 781 213 5200  
1-800-638-2258  
[sales@attunity.com](mailto:sales@attunity.com)

**Europe, Middle East  
& Africa**  
T: +44(0) 1344 742 805  
[info-uk@attunity.com](mailto:info-uk@attunity.com)

**Asia Pacific**  
T: + (852) 2756 9233  
[info-hk@attunity.com](mailto:info-hk@attunity.com)

“It was not necessary for us to focus on developing new solutions rather than on how Visual Basic and COM objects interact with Adabas or OpenVMS,” says Eaton. “AIS made this a non-issue. When you’re developing against a tight deadline, the more help you can find, the better.”

Eaton originally presented concepts to PMAS management in May 2001. By September, the IT group had evaluated the options, engaged in six weeks of Visual Basic development, installed and implemented AIS and had a system up and running. The first project was an intranet solution that enabled customer-facing departments to access the database through Internet Explorer. Eaton explains his reasoning. “Our initial goal was to prove the technology and get quick results that an executive could see. We wanted to show management that there were real benefits for the money invested.

Since that time, the IT group has used Attunity Connect to build five systems that either replace older, inefficient processes or deliver capabilities not previously available. These systems enable users to view member data, maintain medical histories, generate and review reports on the company’s performance, transfer data from Adabas to a new finance system and handle premium payment problems.

## Integration Simplified

“Attunity Connect allows us to exploit the reliability and security of the OpenVMS platform as an integral part of our Windows solutions,” says Chris Davis, Database Systems Manager. “It gives us all the advantages and none of the restrictions of our legacy system. Now, we use a resilient Windows NT server that fetches and passes data between Adabas and the calling PC or web browser. AIS exposes Adabas data to the server via ADO.”

AIS presents data as if Adabas were relational, without flattening the hierarchy. Davis goes into detail, “It handles multi-value fields, periodic groups and Adabas indexing structures such as descriptors, super-descriptors, multi-fetch and user defined and phonetic indexes. What is more, it deals properly with date and time fields, so users can index on these, too. From what I’ve seen so far, AIS will handle our most complex requirements.”

Davis also has good things to say about the performance of Attunity Connect’s native Adabas implementation, “It’s extremely quick. Attunity Connect learns on its own, so it’s effectively getting to the stage where it achieves the fastest access it can.”

In addition, Davis appreciates the time Attunity Connects saves the IT group, “It takes less than an hour for Attunity Connect to populate metadata from the entire database right from the Adabas repository. If we had to code those manually, it would take us half an hour per file and there are 140 files. That’s even before we begin to import data. And we don’t have to modify the existing Adabas data structure at all.”

## A Demonstrable ROI

In terms of operations, the biggest benefit, according to Eaton, is the ability for users to access different aspects of the same information in multiple windows at the same time. For example, users could simultaneously view member data from the database and related paperwork from a document management system. This gives PMAS a more comprehensive picture of what’s going on.

Eaton talks about other advantages, “Not only do we maximize the value of our very knowledgeable IT staff. We can run the company faster or need fewer people to do the same jobs. That means delivering greater benefits and better service to our members.” In recognition of raising the service standard, PMAS became the first affinity group of its type to receive the Raising Standards quality mark from the Pensions Protection and Investments Accreditation Board (PPIAB), the independent body responsible for enforcing accreditation. In the same year, the society was nominated for the British Computing Society Excellence Award for its professional development achievements.

## A Foundation for the Future

Eaton discusses upcoming plans, “We will continue to extend and streamline our business processes. We can easily add a web front end to existing applications. We can join data from other databases, like SQL, simply by licensing other Attunity adapters. It won’t be at all difficult, given our current architecture.”

“Remember, while we have already satisfied management’s demands for immediate results, that was not our primary goal. AIS is not a quick-fix solution but a strategic investment,” concludes Eaton. “We made the purchase with a long-term view on where we want to be rather than on instant success.”