

Case Study

Who we helped

The Thomas Cook Group is one of the world's leading travel and foreign exchange brands. Thomas Cook Corporate Foreign Exchange supplies foreign currency products, such as Currency, Travellers' Cheques, Wire Transfers, Foreign Bank Drafts and Emergency Money Transfers to clients in a diverse range of market sectors including legal and patent firms, manufacturing, media, financial services, security, leisure, and charities.

What we found

Thomas Cook Corporate Foreign Exchange was operating with manual and very basic electronic order processing systems. They were struggling to keep up with demand and finding it difficult to grow the business because prospective clients wanted to be able to place and track orders online. In the back office, the lack of integration between systems meant that data was being re-keyed, with the accompanying opportunities for errors to creep in.

A project had been started to outsource development of an integrated solution but after 18 months it had produced little, apart from documentation. Black Pepper was introduced as an experienced agile development partner to rescue the project.

How we helped

Within five months, the first version of the Thomas Cook CFX Direct application was online, allowing customers to place and track orders and CFX staff to process them. Since then there have been a number of further releases to incorporate additional back-office functionality including invoicing, customer credit management and online card payments.

Black Pepper developed CFX using numerous Agile techniques but one of the key reasons for success has been the use of User Stories and Business Prioritisation in the management of requirements. Because the requirements are owned by business users, they have the flexibility to rearrange priorities from one iteration to the next. In the first release this enabled us to capture current and future requirements, while concentrating on building the core ordering functions. We were able to deploy these core functions for customers to use, making customer ordering more efficient and enabling Thomas Cook to win accounts they couldn't get without an online ordering facility.

Subsequent releases have built on these foundations, adding more facilities for customers and integrating the back-office functionality previously provided by disparate systems. During these developments, the users were able to steer development so that the system would solve the most pressing problems that they were experiencing in their day-to-day operations.

Since going live in September 2008 CFX Direct has enabled Thomas Cook to triple the turnover of its Corporate Foreign Exchange operation.

What we used

