

# Estate agents – problems of a paper based office essay sample



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## Introduction

An estate agent based in a paper-based office comes across a lot of problems. It necessary to solve these problems and try to bring the system of the basic system and improve to be more efficient and more reliable in a working area. The firm is in an area that is equally part urban and part rural. Further more because of this area people are constantly moving in and out of the town. The estate agents have asked for our help to be able to cope with this type of ever-flowing business

- \* The employees desk may well be covered in paper work.
- \* Obviously pieces of information are going to get lost.
- \* Also files and information are going to be mixed.
- \* Furthermore when you receive notice of a house that needs to be sold, the estate agents will have to make a new record for the estate agents to view details of this house.

In order to help me understand the problems that an estate agent was having, I needed to understand what problems they were really struggling with so I asked with great consideration (appendix 1)

## Collecting data

The estate agent must collect a variety of sources. Also in an estate agents you have to learn to take down every bit of information. All the information that you give to your customers equals more money. A problem that may occur is collecting information about the customer's details. This is time

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consuming because you have to find the name, try to understand it then change certain areas that need to be. This task would be repeated more than five times a day, this would make this task very frustrating.

### Storing Data

A lot of space and filing cabinets are needed if you do not have a computer when storing. When your estate agents gets popular, a lot more people will want your estate agents to find houses. This will make it harder organising the data. Which also gives the problem of whether other employees can understand it. Also a big problem is if there were a fire all the data would be lost. Also with storing data, only one person can use it at one time and there is not a backup

### Retrieving Data

Retrieving Data could be difficult and may waste time if the files were put into the wrong order or, because the whole filing system may be wrong then it will have to be sorted out into that correct order. Meanwhile you are still trying to find the file you would like. It can be easily destroyed, a mess and unable to read. Even worse it can be incorrect and if it is important it could make the Estate Agents job more difficult than it already is.

### Outputting Data

When using and changing data it can become a mess if it is hand-written.

When using Data if somebody else apart from you writes it could be part unable to read. Changing data can cause this, just imagine you have two

people that want to swap houses and one of them live in a street almost the  
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same as another customer. These leads to other problems, you first have to find the data, then change or destroy it. This can also cause a great mix-up in the two addresses. When Changing data you will have to cross out words for a start or have tip-ex which causes a great mess and also wasting a lot of time. Also as well as no extras that you can have on a typewriter, It is harder to delete Words, letters etc.

## Process

## Problems

### Collecting data

- \* Recording information on a scrap piece of paper, the piece of paper might get lost. Information can be easily destroyed, messy and may be difficult for other employees to read.
- \* Collecting Data from someone over the phone may take time.

### Storing data

- \* Files are stored in filing cabinet; these will take a lot of space.
- \* Files would have to be copied into neat. These will take time.
- \* It takes time to put the files in the correct place.

### Retrieving data

- \* Files may be put in the wrong order

## Outputting data

\* May be messy from when an employee has retrieved data

\* Can easily get mixed up by files that are alike.

## Analysis

Different methods that could be used would be using an electronic package such as a computer to save time and effort and avoid a lot of mistakes that are happening now.

## Feasibility

### Collecting data

1) Collect the data from the customers at the estate agents and recording the data on a form view on a computer.

This would be at an advantage because forms can be easily read. Data can be easily entered but would be difficult to protect from other employees.

### JAMES

2) Visit the customer's house and retrieve data using a data capture form.

-Or-

Take a portable computer e. g. laptop, to record data from the customer.

(Disadvantage: this cost a lot of money.)

## Storing

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### 1) Non-specialist program e. g. Access

Advantage

Disadvantage

- \* Cheap
- \* Not specific to Estate Agents
- \* Easy to use
- \* Can be altered
- \* Flexible

### 2) Specialists Package

Advantage

Disadvantage

- \* Specific
- \* Expensive
- \* Solve problems
- \* New system must be learned
- \* Should be more relevant
- \* Training needed

- \* Maybe some things that are not totally relevant

- \* Could be more difficult to use

- \* More expensive

- \* Maybe harder to find

- \* Difficult to find

3) Getting a specialist to write a program for you.

Advantage

Disadvantage

- \* You decide what you want

- \* Harder to find designer

- \* Costs a lot

4) Microfiche

Advantage

Disadvantage

- \* Easy to use

- \* No back up

- \* Cheap

- \* Manual slow
- \* No training needed
- \* Open to human error
- \* No specialists
- \* Maybe hard to find one
- \* Limited space
- \* Difficult to alter records
- \* Only one at a time

We have chosen the non-specialist package because it is technically feasible. It is economically feasible because it does not cost as much as the specialist package. Although it costs more than the microfiche, it benefits us better because it is easy to use, easy to find and is flexible.

The non-specialist package also has fewer disadvantages than the specialist package and the microfiche. The non-specialist package's disadvantage is that it is not specific to the Estate Agents and it is liable to crash. It also has the most advantages out of the three.

After buying the computer and certain packages, other items need to be bought. One of these items is a printer.

Samsung Izzzi plus Laser Printer



Price inc. VAT i;½199. 99

Is the cheapest printer that was found.

Design

Some of the objectives of the design phase are as follows:

- \* To be able to access the database quickly (preferably under a minute.).
- \* To be able to retrieve specific data using questions (preferably in less than two minutes.).
- \* To be able to retrieve data a print out a report in under 2 minutes.

Giving out data as a data capture form is a quick and easy way of collecting data. It is also easier to read if the sheet has boxes for the reader to fill by the reader using block capitals and having multi-choice questions to tick.

Storing data will be much easier if a computer is involved. If a mistake is made then it can be changed while still being neat, but if you make a mistake on paper, to keep it neat you will have to re-write it all again.

The retrieving of data is much easier when it is in the form of a query. This can be accessed through Microsoft Access, which can filter out information wanted by the user.

Using and changing data can be done easily and efficiently when using a P. C. It can be easily read and is a lot neater and doesn't take a lot of time.

Always make sure you have a backup in case the information has to be changed or something happens to the computer e. g. Computer virus.

### Analysis

Collecting data from other companies is the thing you need in order for your own business to succeed. Don't just use their ideas add some of your own.

Collecting data is a fast and easy way if you have a computer. It is a lot harder if you do not have a computer and also takes up a lot more time e. g. it will have to be hand written and rushing can make your handwriting very scruffy and untidy.

You need a lot of space and filing cabinets if you have a paper based office when storing information. There is also the problem of having the right information. When your business grows, your shop space will also need to grow (if it can). It will also be a lot harder organising the data. Which also gives the problem of whether other employees can understand it.

When retrieving data it can be easily destroyed and a mess and unable to be read. Even worse it can be incorrect and if it is important it could destroy your whole business. Which could make you deeply in debt. If files that play a big part in your business get lost, this mistake could destroy the business.

When outputting data it could waste valuable time and if a mistake is made while writing a document you would have to write all over again to make it more readable and neatly organised. If you have a lot of customers and you have some information to give out to your customers you have to re-write all

of your letters to each individual customer and this method could take weeks.

Implement

Collecting data is easy and efficient when using data capture forms. Data capture forms allow the customer to fill in the form using block capitals which is easy for the customer to fill in and is also easy for the sender to read as some handwriting is hard to read by others. Below is the capture form half created for handing out to customers- (appendix A)

Then I had to create another data capture form for employees to use when finding houses (appendix B)

When I had retrieved all the data I needed, I then stored it in Microsoft access as a table because I could enter and retrieve data quite fast and easily. Again below are two tables showing customers and information from houses- (appendix C)

This is what the customers' table looks like. On the next page is the house information table- (appendix D)

Below is what the tables started off like using access and then going into design view.

Retrieving data was done through Microsoft Access. I would make a search for the information that I needed and then I would use it. A faster way to find information is to make a query to find a certain person or people that I needed from a particular group.

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The design view is as shown-

The query is shown (appendix E). Also I needed a report that employees could get to easily as seen below I used ' owners with semi-detached houses' as an example (appendix F)

Using Microsoft Word then creating a mail merge letter using information from the forms made in Microsoft Access carried out outputting data. Then I had type a certain document that I needed and then the mail merge copied out the sufficient amount of letters needed for all the customers in that certain document.