

DATA ASSET MANAGEMENT

ROWLAND'S CLOTHING

David Selby, Managing Director of Rowland's Clothing, describes the importance of maintaining a strong supporter database.

The first Rowland's Clothing opened in Bath in 1983, selling high quality, smart casual men's clothing. The business went from strength to strength and soon expanded, launching a women's range and a thriving mail order catalogue, which now forms the backbone of their core business.

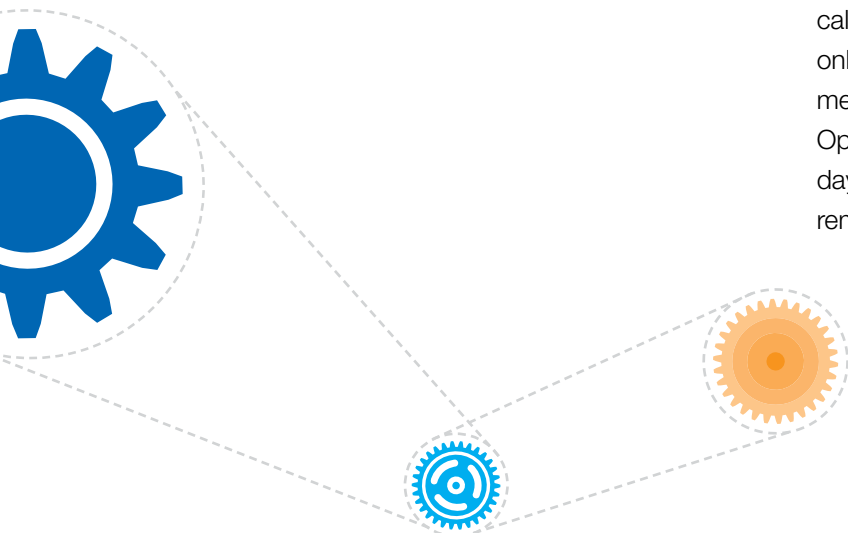
A truly multi-channel retail brand with a discerning and mature audience, Rowland's now has a further 6-stores across the UK and recently launched their increasingly popular ecommerce website, which showcases all of their collections.

With a unique customer focused ethos, Rowland's Clothing aims to deliver a bespoke service in an increasingly faceless and automated retail environment, which is underpinned by a highly responsible approach to their data marketing.

At Rowland's we take our data management responsibilities very seriously. Not just from an industry best practice standpoint but because our brand's foundations lay in our ability to deliver the high levels of customer service our mature clientele expect and deserve. Using a dirty mailing file is out of the question, as is mailing customers with information and communications that are completely irrelevant to them.

Although we have a relatively small staff, our database requires a great deal of investment both financially and in terms of man-hours, so we outsource our data processing to leading data marketing bureau, meta-morphix Ltd. Because we're a small business we want our outsourced service providers to become an extension of our team, regardless of how big they are. Despite being part of a large organisation, meta-morphix has never made us feel like we're just another customer or better put, an ongoing sales opportunity. The ideas they have brought to the table are improving our internal processes and helping us to deliver our business objectives. That's what outsourcing should be about.

We currently use an in-house order processing system called Options, which stores contact details for our online and mail order customers. Prior to working with meta-morphix Ltd we would extract data selections from Options to build mailing files and it could take several days to get a file just right after de duping, cleansing and removing deceased data.



Our customer demographic takes the issue of junk mail and junk emails very seriously. All our direct mail and email marketing needs to be mindful of industry legislation, eliminate mailings to the deceased and avoid creating unnecessary waste. In order to maximise our sales and maintain good links with our customers it is critical that our mail goes to the correct person and that anyone who receives mail from us considers it useful, even if they don't make a purchase from us.

To that end, meta-morphix now undertake all our routine cleansing prior to mailing to make sure that the data is up to scratch. In addition, we've installed meta-morphix' analysis software, Faststats, which has helped us to improve the speed at which we build our mailing files, from days to within hours. We feed all our campaign responses and orders into Faststats, so our data quality, responsiveness and our ability to target strengthens with each mailing. And, there are obvious financial and environmental benefits associated with making increasingly informed, intelligent data selections.

The secret of our longevity comes down to having a good understanding of our customers. For example, we've grown into a multi-channel business in response to our client. However, I certainly don't think we'll ever

become a completely online brand because it's not what our customers want. Similarly, good analysis helps us to serve our customers better by helping track how they interact with our brand across the channels.

Because our approach to database management has developed gradually and organically, it's easy to see how much more intensive our working processes have become over the years. Moving forward I want to integrate our online and offline databases and continue to work with meta-morphix to gain an even greater understanding of our customers; adding more intelligence along the way so that we can increase our efficiencies and segment the database to greatest effect.

