



insight case study - Openwork

company background

Openwork Limited is a directly authorised franchise network. It comprises over 800 firms with around 2,600 financial advisers across the UK. The Openwork Group is owned - via ordinary shares - by its advisers with a 67.5% share, 7.5% by its employees and 25% by Zurich Financial Services Group.

As a multi-tied distributor, Openwork selects top quality products via single high volume providers for pensions, investments, protection (life assurance, critical illness) and general insurance.

In the mortgage sector, Openwork operates a whole-of-market panel of over 40 lenders and is among the top three distributors for almost all the major mortgage providers.

business requirement

Openwork takes the quality of its advisers very seriously and invests heavily in a strong Training & Competence (T&C) scheme to maximise the development of their advisers. Having to run such a scheme across such a large network is a complex task. With 2,600 advisers supported by 140 supervisors, it is easy to see there are tens of thousands of T&C events every week. Keeping track of these events and ensuring they happen in the correct sequence and at the right time is a huge undertaking.

As a result, several years ago, Openwork moved to an IT system based T&C scheme. Through this work they began to get control of the complex events and processes that form the basis of an intermediary's T&C system. However they became reliant on two separate software solutions, namely:

- 1) Worksmart - to build the training and development plans for the advisers and;
- 2) WBT systems to execute the electronic training and testing.

Neither solution communicated with the other. Two sets of licence fees were being charged and some of the components of the solutions were based on 'old' technology that would need rewriting to move to the 'online' web-based world in which Openwork wanted to operate.

It was quickly realised that Openwork needed a single system that could address all their T&C needs in an effective and efficient way. It had been established that the solution used to build the development plans needed to link to the system managing the training. Courses needed to be booked on-line for the development system and results of the training need to be logged and accessed in the same way too.

The vision of the new T&C system went far beyond the bounds of just training and development and included functions such as case checking and risk management. It can be shown that if the case checking produces consistently highlighted issues with an adviser's submitted business, this usually highlights and triggers a training need. Similarly, if a risk management system measures key performance indicators for advisers and issues are identified in one of these areas, again a training and development need arises. Looking forward, Openwork wanted to add a recruitment function, complaints management and financial promotions control. The creation of such a holistic approach sets Openwork aside from many other distributors in the support of training and competence.

In summary Openwork were looking for systems that could:

- Build and manage training and development plans
- Manage the training courses
- Perform online testing to monitor progress
- Log CPD activity
- Support the file checking of business submitted to ensure compliance
- Run a risk management process enabling managers to check the key performance indicators for the business
- Streamline the recruitment of new advisers
- Manage the complaints procedure
- Help control financial promotions
- Provide accurate timely management information

redland 'Insight' solution

To address these needs, Openwork turned to Redland Business Solutions. Redland tackles the logistical problems surrounding the effective management of Training & Competence schemes with the 'Insight' product suite - its efficient technology solution. Insight offers a series of components that can address specific T&C needs or provide an integrated solution across numerous T&C disciplines – matching the requirements of Openwork perfectly.

The T&C processes are driven from within a single system, enabling key data to be shared across the different areas of a business and across multiple geographic locations. As new courses are completed and tests passed, new competencies and qualifications are logged in the system. Issues flagged up in the complaints management or case checking module can drive new items and actions in the development plans for advisers and supervisors.

Insight is more than a simple off-the-shelf learning management system – it is a powerful and effective workflow engine that can manage the wider business processes. Insight allows these business processes to be configured quickly and efficiently, so that Openwork can maintain any differentiation that they are trying to protect while improving their overall efficiency in a cost effective manner.

In short, Redland offered Openwork:

- A single system across all their T&C needs
- The ability to share data and process across different functions, processes and locations
- A modern web-based infrastructure to minimise deployment issues
- The ability to work with a team of financial services experts that understood their T&C requirements

The Redland experience is more than just the software, as the delivery team at Redland has the domain expertise to ensure that the Insight solution is tailored to the exact needs of the client. "The Redland team have excelled at Openwork" states Alec Adams, Director of Business Quality at Openwork. "They listen well, take on board our requirements and then always return with more than we expected".

benefits realised

The Insight system offers business benefits to a number of stakeholders at Openwork. The Network itself has greater certainty about the state of its business and a more efficient T&C scheme. The supervisors have gained substantial time savings and have increased their span of control, while the advisers have an efficient way of keeping tabs on their plans and logging CPD activity.

"The over-riding benefit offered by the Insight solution was one of confidence in the central records and processes across a large number of staff and locations." says Alec. "We now have an automated means of checking that compliance tasks are done and if not an efficient way of addressing the issues that arise".

As a by-product (but a very substantial business benefit) of the Insight implementation Openwork is now well positioned to meet the demands of the new Professional Standards laid down by the FSA's current RDR proposals. Insight will assist in building the development plans for the advisers to reach the required standards and then monitor and manage progress against these plans. The management information produced by Insight also enables the management team to keep on top of the potential risks associated with getting the organisation fit for the 2012 deadlines.

"Because we hold central information on the all advisers now, we can at any point review how many have reached QCA Level 4 and review the development plans of those not yet at the appropriate level".

In summary Insight is enabling Openwork to streamline its business support function while at the same time preparing the organisation for the changes it faces with RDR. Huge benefits in a market facing great change while operating in tough business conditions.

Reference Site details

Redland actively encourage all prospects considering the Insight Training and Competence solution to undertake a reference visit to Openwork. This can be arranged on request.