

Case Study

WW Group, Inc.

The WW Group deployed Cardiff TeleForm to automate the data entry for 100,000 members attending 4,000 weekly Weight Watchers meetings.

The WW Group, Inc., Weight Watchers largest franchise group, didn't believe it had a forms processing "problem." Using manual data entry, the company had historically met its production goals—at what it believed was a reasonable cost. However, when presented with the opportunity to take 40% or more "off the middle" in terms of the manual cost of processing forms, the WW Group decided to make a change. After the company began using Cardiff® TeleForm® for automated forms processing, it soon found that the benefits went far beyond simple cost reduction. Thanks to TeleForm, the WW Group has been able to capture a completely new level of electronic information, dramatically improving communication with members and enabling new retention and promotional opportunities.

The Challenge

The WW Group, Inc. is the largest franchise group of Weight Watchers International, the worldwide organization that has helped over 25 million women and men learn good health habits, shed pounds, and become more fit and healthy. Led by its renowned president and CEO Florine Mark, the WW Group operates Weight Watchers meetings in 12 states, Mexico, and parts of Canada.

Each week, the WW group hosts approximately 4,000 meetings with over 100,000 members in attendance. At each meeting, a "tally form" is filled in with summary information about the meeting, such as staff names, number of members attending, types of products and services purchased, and dollar amount sold. This form is then mailed back to the WW Group's headquarters in Farmington Hills, Mich.

Prior to implementing an automatic information capture solution, the information on the 4,000 weekly forms was manually keyed



into WW Group's proprietary database using 5.5 full-time employees, totaling about 220 people-hours a week. "This was really the same process we'd used for 30 years," said Amy Brozgold, vice president and CFO of the WW Group. "And while we have effectively leveraged new technologies in several ways, including Weight Watchers International's, www.weightwatchers.com, the WW Group's, www.888-3-florine.com, and Florine Mark's, www.florineonline.com, we did not enjoy the full potential of information capture until presented with a better way using TeleForm."

The Solution

Cardiff predicted that by scanning and converting the handwritten, numeric-intensive forms into data—correcting only data that TeleForm could not detect—the company would improve overall processing efficiency by at least 40 percent. "Beyond expertise in automated processing, Cardiff Consulting Services also offered a turnkey solution," said Brozgold, "This was an excellent option for us because we don't have in-house technical resources to draw upon."

The design and installation of the Cardiff solution was quick and painless. It took only about four months, from initial contact with Cardiff to production. The Cardiff Professional Services team also worked closely with the WW Group's software consultant to create an interface between TeleForm and the WW Group's proprietary system. After just one week of parallel testing with the existing manual process, the TeleForm solution was implemented company-wide.

Customer at a Glance

WW Group, Inc.

Industry: Service

Application: Automated Data Collection

Challenge: Managing 4,000 weekly meetings with over 100,000 members in attendance

Solution: Cardiff TeleForm

Results:

- Automation of manual data entry for 100,000 members attending 4,000 weekly meetings
- 40% reduction of manual form processing cost
- Increase of individualized communication to each member

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—Amy Brozgold, VP and CFO of the WW Group

A key aspect of the implementation was its complete transparency to the company's staff in the field. "The form Cardiff designed in TeleForm was nearly identical to our original form," said Brozgold. "This was critical for us because trying to train 3,000 staff on a new process would have been very difficult."

Cardiff's initial prediction of at least a 40 percent time and cost savings turned out to be accurate. The WW Group now processes the same number of forms—more accurately—with just over two full-time employees instead of five and a half.

"The system exceeded our expectations, and we are thrilled with the results," said Brozgold. "But the benefits go far beyond an ability to shift employees to more productive tasks. Since implementing TeleForm, we've rolled out a series of new initiatives that have dramatically improved the way we do business, ideas we hadn't even imagined before TeleForm."

Previously, all of the collected information was "trapped" in the proprietary database and could not be easily extracted for other uses. With TeleForm, collected information is processed simultaneously into the proprietary application and to a new Oracle database. Ready access to the data has allowed the WW Group to use the information in new ways, including making all the information collected on its 100,000 members each week immediately available to staff and members via a secure website.

Benefits of Cardiff

"TeleForm has also added tremendous value to our telemarketing activities," said Brozgold. "We receive thousands of telephone calls from our members each day. With the newly gleaned information we have obtained as a result of TeleForm, we can bring up each member's master information and attendance history as soon as the call comes into the call center, and

have it available at our fingertips as we talk to our members. This is extremely valuable, as it allows us to use the call to update master information, such as address and email, and we can actually discuss each member's weight loss progress with the most recent data."

Once the team at the WW Group had access to the TeleForm form designer, they saw the tremendous potential in collecting a completely new level of information on members. "The more we use TeleForm, the more possibilities we see," said Brozgold. "The first form we designed on our own was a new member profile with name, address, email address, and the like. But we also have several lifestyle questions, such as how much they exercise, if they cook for themselves or for a family, how often they eat out, their weight loss goals, and more. It allows us to learn so much more about our members and then address their individual needs. For example, we can email recipes or exercise tips based on an individual's particular interest. It's a new and remarkable means of direct communication with our members."

Another new form is used to record the weight of each member at each weekly meeting. By using a unique member ID, the WW Group is able to automatically track a member's weight history. The system even identifies when a member misses a meeting, enabling a WW Group staff member to give the member a call or send an email. Members also have access to their personal histories via the Web.

"There's a tremendous promotional aspect to all this," said Brozgold. "The timeliness of the data gives us the ability to generate excitement at the personal level that simply wasn't available before. Trying to collect the new volume of information without TeleForm would have been impossible, so it's really enabled us to create a completely

new relationship with our members. No other Weight Watchers franchise has ever been able to collect and use this level of information electronically."

While Brozgold continues to explore new applications for TeleForm, one key future step is implementing Cardiff's TeleForm eForm Option. This will allow the staff to fill in forms electronically, send and submit them via email, processing can be further streamlined and new automated applications can be developed. "The potential is truly unlimited," Brozgold said.

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