

GROWTH THROUGH CHANGE AT NIELSEN CLEARING HOUSE

Nielsen Clearing House (NCH) processes over a million coupons a day for its retailer and manufacturer clients, making it the number one coupon redemption house in the UK. It redeems 'money off' coupons and fulfills requests for information or gifts, arising from clients promotional campaigns. Its future growth will come from expanding into new markets, for which it is buying the latest and most flexible computer technology, including a ROCC 2835 multiuser system. NCH is a subsidiary of A C Nielsen, the world's largest market research organisation, itself a

company within The Dun & Bradstreet Corporation's marketing services arm.

THREE QUARTERS OF UK MARKET

"We are the largest redeemer of coupons in the UK, servicing 300 manufacturers and 250 retailers. This accounts for over three quarters of the UK coupon redemption market," said Dave Robinson, operations manager. Coupons arrive at NCH by the van load. They are first sorted into groups according to face value, then sub-divided by manufacturers and finally by offer code.

"The total number of each bundle, and value, is entered onto a batch sheet for each manufacturer. The operations department keys the values and quantities for each manufacturer onto the ROCC computer, to arrive at a daily total sum for redemption for individual manufacturers," Robinson continued.

"Although coupon redemption represents the bulk of NCH's work, it only accounts for about 10 per cent of my department's time, the rest being taken up by promotions fulfilment - entering onto the ROCC computer the details of people requesting information of promotional gifts. Promotions work is more com-



Bonsor endorses Robinson's comment that NCH will only stay ahead by looking forward.



Data entry supervisor Margaret Crawford is responsible for 20 dp staff at Nielsen.

plex than the keying done for coupons. I have 28 women working on 40 to 60 different promotions at any one time.

"The task is unusually difficult and varied. Unlike many data entry tasks, our data arrives in any number of formats, from soap packet tops to carton lids. These are not the easiest things to write on, so my data entry team has had to become very adept at reading difficult handwriting!" Robinson added.

Once the data has been keyed into the ROCC system it is transferred to tape and then processed further by two IBM System 38s, one for the coupons work and one for promotions. The latter has a comms link available to clients, giving them immediate and direct access to the data NCH has collected.

GROWTH

"NCH sees promotions fulfilment as a major growth area. The ROCC computer is integral to our growth – its flexibility is crucial," Robinson continued.

To meet its aggressive plans, Robinson realised that NCH would need to replace its existing equipment, which was nine years old. It was slow – lacking essential features like data validation, as well as being difficult to run and maintain.

MUST BE ABLE TO GROW

"Our specification called for a machine which offered us much more in the way of validation, plus greater support and easier operation and maintenance. We looked for a machine which allowed us to do the work we did before, as we did it before, but also had the

potential to develop to meet expanding business.

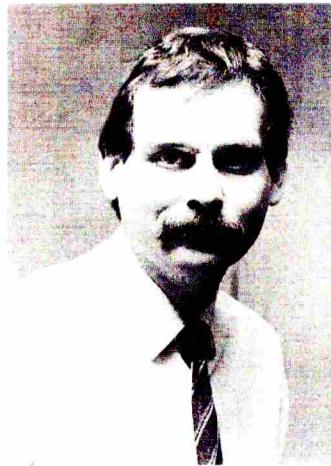
"We chose ROCC Computers over both Nixdorf and McDonnell Douglas, partly on the basis of price performance, but also because ROCC offered us a machine specifically designed for data capture. The ROCC 2835 can be easily expanded and will readily accept peripherals like OCRs, via a PC link," Robinson explained.

MORE SPEED MORE CHECKS

Promotions fulfilment work involves considerable cross-checking between fields and validation of entries within fields. The ROCC computer gives both sophisticated validation and better response times. It performs checks on many fields including product codes. The large memory of the ROCC 2835 means more information can be stored locally, reducing the time taken to perform a validation check. By entering constants and repeated fields at an initial stage considerable input time is also saved.

TO THE FUTURE

"When we bought the ROCC computer we were also looking to the future. Its flexibility will allow us to pursue a number of development options. A lot of the data could be captured more quickly, and accurately, by using OCRs or barcode scanners. It would also mean that we could do less initial



Robinson... "We are the largest redeemer of coupons in the UK."

sorting of coupons, simply reading them into the ROCC as we received them," said Robinson.

The ROCC computer could also be used as a front-end processor, the data being stored for retrieval on the IBM System 3, or a comms link to the IBM could be set up, to effect immediate and direct file transfers.

"NCH will only stay ahead by looking forward. We are looking beyond our traditional stronghold of coupons redemption, to extending our presence in promotions fulfilment, by offering a more efficient, accurate and cost effective promotion fulfilment service than offered by in-house departments. This will only be possible where our technology is flexible enough to grow and change to meet our evolving requirements. The ROCC 2835 keeps these avenues open," concluded Robinson. ■

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