A Fine New System

A new Fixed Payment Notice (FPN) system has been implemented in the back office of the Revenue Protection Unit in Connolly Station. This FPN System is currently in place for Luas, Transdev and Dublin Bus.

In 2015 there were 9,606 Fixed Payment Notices issued. There was a 22% increase in the number of Fixed Payment Notices issued in 2014 compared with 2013 and this trend remains in an upward direction putting more pressure on the system in use. As a source of revenue for us, it is critical that there is an intelligent information system to ensure detailed reporting and timely payment of fines.

Main Triggers for the New System

1. Two separate systems existed, one for DART and one for Innercity

The back office was using two disparate systems; Access and Infopath as both the Intercity & Commuter (ICCN) and DART had individual systems. This meant inputters were moving between systems with differing designs. These disparate systems continued when the RPU was centralised, meaning that the Head of Revenue Protection and the Revenue Protection & Prosecutions Manager had to interrogate each system separately and add the results together. Often they had to physically count original fines for statistics purpose as the original system didn't allow for any meaningful interrogation. Another issue with the existing system was there was no single view across one person. A person could have a fine on the DART database but the ICCN database had no visibility of it.

2. Everything was manually typed

Prior to the new system, everything was manually typed, for example, there were no drop down boxes with list of stations, Revenue Protection officers' names, train times or routes. This lead to the likelihood of poor quality data as typing errors/spelling errors could occur due to the high volumes to be input.

3. Inconsistent design between forms and databases

The fields on the screen and the form didn't match. As a result, it slowed down the speed of inputting as everything on the screen had to be matched to the form field for input. This contributed to a growing backlog and as a consequence, reminder notices, at times, were late going out to customers. This type of backlog can be very demotivating for an employee – no matter how hard the team worked, there seemed no end to it!

4. Databases were not built for high volume

There were over 38,000 records on the databases which were not built for high volume and as a result crashes often happened. Up to eight people could have been inputting at any one time and the input may not have updated correctly. The resulting consequence was that a letter could go out to someone who has already paid a fine.

Leading the Change

Roger Tobin, Head of Revenue Protection, has been leading the change project with support from Dave Cannon Manager Revenue and Prosecutions and Shauna Fitzsimmons on the systems side. The back office team have also supported the change process.

The team worked with David Bettles Information Systems, Keith Faherty Online Manager, Group IT and Customer First in specifying and clarifying what the system requirements were before Dovetail could commence their work.

Communication and Training

The team had been briefed on the full extent of the system change. These briefings were supported by the Customer First, People and Communications Lead, Linda Allen and were made by Dave Cannon and Shauna Fitzsimmons.

A training test system was set up by Dovetail to ensure all the team were comfortable with the system before it launched. They all found the system to be very straightforward and could really appreciate its benefits.

The Dovetail systems supplier facilitated the training for all involved. They also provided systems support for the team to ensure the team were fully supported in the 'go live' and beyond. Brian Quinn, Business Process Lead, documented the new processes arising from the implementation of the new system. This was to ensure there was no ambiguity in the implementation and ensured the process in place was the optimal one.

Benefits of the New System

One of the biggest benefits for the team is the removal of the backlog. All their hard work has significantly contributed to this. Other benefits include;

1. One single view of a 'customer'
The new system can highlight fraudulent persons or highlight repeat offenders. It is able to supply fraud lists or repeat offenders across both systems. This allows for a more intelligent type of reporting and more successful prosecutions.

2. Better targeting of fare evasion
It allows the RPU team to more intelligently target times and services where there are fare evasions above average. The system allows them to interrogate information by multiple fields e.g. by station, by time, by ticket types, by day of the week and by any other fields stored. The new system has all the information in the one place, it reduces the dependence on physical files.

3. One single system in place and customisation of screens
There is now one single system in place for all the back office team capturing all Railway Undertaking fine data. Customisation took place for ease of use for the inputter on all screens. The new screens mirror the FPN form and will follow the fields of the form as it appears on the page.

4. Template letters created for all scenarios
Template files for all types of letter have been supplied to the new system and can be generated automatically.

5. Preloaded lists and drop down boxes
The new system will have these all lists preloaded along with the actual timetable. It will also have an address link with google maps eliminating the need for freeform typing.

6. Appeals process standardised
The time spend on appeals has reduced as the appeals process has been standardised and the appeal is done via email with the addition of the attachment on the system.

7. Flexible to change
The new system is more flexible to change. The systems allows the addition of new routes, times, officers and can allow the addition or amendment of any fields.

Phase 2 Online Payment Facility

Work is currently ongoing in setting up an online payment facility with a Go Live expected in February 2016. Currently there are limitations on payment options as a customer can only pay during office hours, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. There will be huge benefits to the customer to pay online anytime as the back office team had received complaints from people who wanted to pay but couldn't get through.

This will also mean a reduction of phone calls to the office to allow the employees allocate their time on the key tasks of managing repeat offenders, analysing areas to target and managing files for maximum court prosecutions.

Phase 3 Customer First

Customer First is currently looking at electronic solutions to make the RPU more efficient.

Currently Revenue Protection Officers write out Fixed Payment Notices (FPN's) which would mean real time inputting. There will be real benefits in the adoption of these portable devices.