

CASE STUDY: PERFECTHOME

Breathing new life into a legacy system at PerfectHome

How Synaptek automated a 130-step manual process in under three weeks, delivering the equivalent of **two extra full-time employees** and extending the life of a bespoke legacy system.

The Company

PerfectHome is a household goods retailer in the UK. Established in 2006, it enables customers to pay weekly for household, electrical goods and services. The company makes it possible for more people to create their perfect home.

The business went through a significant period of transformation when it moved away from its bricks and mortar retail operation and focused its attentions to an online only offering in 2018. Shortly after, PerfectHome commissioned Synaptek's parent company, Spherica, to do a review of its IT infrastructure to help the transition to a pure player operation.

A few months after this assessment, Spherica launched its Digital Innovation Division, Synaptek, and introduced PerfectHome to the opportunities that process automation could bring to its operations. An initial proof of concept project was agreed and Synaptek commenced its working relationship with PerfectHome at the end of 2019.



At a Glance

INDUSTRY UK Retail & ECommerce

KEY CHALLENGES

A highly manual process to ship orders was limiting scalability. Information was duplicated between systems and human error was a risk. Replacing the legacy system at the heart of this process would be costly and disruptive.

THE SOLUTION

A tailored solution uses RPA and terminal emulation to automate the delivery booking process from end-to-end. Manual data duplication is removed and the life of the legacy system is extended.

RESULTS

- Increased productivity: equivalent to **two extra full-time employees**.
- Time to identify and resolve order errors is significantly reduced.
- Personnel are freed up for more valuable tasks.

The Challenge

PerfectHome uses a bespoke legacy system for every aspect of order management, from CRM to stock control and distribution. This core system was designed to support the original high street retail operation.

Orders received via the company's website, www.perfecthome.co.uk, are processed into this custom-built system and the end-to-end process to ship an item to a customer involves 130 manual steps. When booking customer deliveries, order information is manually duplicated at various stages of the order process, and staff are required to copy and paste information from screen to screen.

The risk of human error is huge with such a complex, manual process, and on-boarding new order management personnel is laborious. Six full-time members of staff are required to manage order processing and the volume of orders is continually increasing as the business grows.

As the business and customer base have rapidly grown, managing orders through the legacy system in this way was increasingly reliant on more personnel. The time-consuming process was not fit for the future, but the system was so embedded within operations that it would be incredibly costly and slow to replace.

Synaptek identified an opportunity to automate the order process within the legacy system

Synaptek identified an opportunity to automate the order process within the existing system, extending its life by speeding up order processing and reducing the risk of human error. The ultimate goal of the automation was to improve the productivity and reliability of the order process, enabling PerfectHome to be more agile and deliver the best customer experience.

“When transitioning to operate purely online, we had to act fast to transform our operations in order to protect our service levels and excellent Trustpilot rating.

We were introduced to Synaptek and I was immediately impressed by the knowledge, ambition and passion of the team. We needed a disruptive solution and that's exactly what we saw from Synaptek.”

Mark Blakelock | Chief Operating Officer
PerfectHome



The Solution

As PerfectHome headed towards the peak Christmas trading period in 2019, Synaptek was tasked with a Proof of Concept (POC) to identify whether it was possible to automate the order flow through the existing system.

There was some scepticism within the business as to whether such a complex process could be automated effectively, utilising a legacy platform which had no API integration with PerfectHome's delivery partners. The pressure was on to design a tailored solution that would have an immediate and significant impact on the business and demonstrate the power of automation to future-proof operations.

“Working with custom-built legacy systems will always present challenges because the intricacies of the system are new to us - but we thrive on this!

One of our USPs is that we're platform agnostic, so we design automation solutions that are unique to your requirements, and we can work with your existing technology stack and extend the life of your legacy platforms.”

Karl Nicholson | CIO, Synaptek

Synaptek worked closely with the team at PerfectHome to get under the skin of the business, understand the limitations of the current process and get to grips with the expectations of the customer. This collaboration enabled the team at Synaptek to identify the best solution to improve ways of working and enhance the end-user experience.

Synaptek designed a system that fuses Robotic Process Automation (RPA) with terminal emulation to do the work of a human. The process screen-scrapes information from a customer's order, automatically populates the relevant fields in the core system and places the

order directly with the distribution partner via an online portal, completely removing the need for manual input.

Complex rules have been put in place to determine how an order is managed as it hits the order queue, automating actions throughout the process to deal with out of stock items, delivery date requirements and order errors.

Following the successful POC, Synaptek was briefed to automate the order flow for all Small Electrical products. Within the first week of trialling the automated process in the live sales environment, PerfectHome identified that the speed and accuracy of the orders processed were equivalent to having two extra FTEs. In the first month, over 1,500 orders were processed by the Synaptek automation.

Most impressive is the fact that the entire project was delivered in record time, during a peak trading period! From the project scoping meeting to the delivery of a working solution took just three weeks, and the Small Electricals project went live in mid-December while PerfectHome were managing Christmas orders.

This initial project only scratched the surface of the efficiencies that a fully automated solution will deliver. It effectively demonstrated the scale of the opportunity to quickly revolutionise ways of working, increase productivity and reduce risk.



The Benefits

- Orders are processed accurately and safeguards within the process work effectively and reduce the man-hours usually involved in identifying order issues.
- Out of stock issues are flagged and orders automatically moved to the back-order queue, enabling the customer service team to manage customer communications more effectively.
- One full-time employee has already been redeployed to a more value-added role within the business, supporting customers on the front-end instead of managing back-end issues.
- Morale within the order management team has improved as personnel have seen first-hand how the most time-consuming, mundane aspects of their jobs can be automated, giving them more time to focus on managing other aspects of the customer experience.

Any friction regarding whether the solution was right for PerfectHome dissolved within the first days of the trial. The company has now committed to a roll-out of the automated order management process to other product areas. There are also a number of other automation projects being scoped out between PerfectHome and Synaptek.

“What Synaptek has delivered in such a short space of time has been nothing short of awe-inspiring!

We’re a progressive business at PerfectHome, and we’re keen to invest in exciting technologies that help us to improve our customer experience. In under a month, our small electrical items delivery process has been revolutionised.

We’re really excited for the future and are delighted to have found such a successful partnership with Synaptek.”

Mark Blakelock | Chief Operating Officer
PerfectHome

The solution delivered for PerfectHome demonstrates the vast benefits which automation can deliver within the retail industry.

To find out more, get in touch with the intelligent automation experts at Synaptek.

SYNAPTEK

letstalk@synaptek.co.uk

synaptek.co.uk



Synaptek, Lewis Building, Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6EQ

