

# linear blue case study



## Switch Communications uses Linear Blue to drive their business

*Linear Blue helps Switch Communications provide a complete range of voice and data systems for business telecommunications services using FileMaker Pro.*

In an ever shifting regulatory and competitive landscape the telecommunication service providers have to use the latest technology to match their customers' tastes, and buying behaviour, and deliver real business benefits. Switch Communications is saving time and money today by using FileMaker to manage their finances, customer contacts, diary, processes, and inventory.

Switch Communications is a specialist solutions provider for business telecommunications services. It provides a complete range of voice and data systems, using both fixed and mobile technologies, and tailored to the exact business priorities of any organisation. Supplying both network management services and equipment from world- renowned vendors such as Alcatel, Switch Communications provides a 24-hour service to its clients.

Switch Communications was founded in 1992 by Dominic Campanaro and Andrew Terry, and has grown to employ nearly 60 people at offices in Croydon and Cardiff, with a turnover in excess of £4.5 million.

### Business Challenge

Using multi-media portals, integrated voice and data networking, and web-based applications and services, Switch Communications is able to deliver seamless and scalable systems integration across any network infrastructure for businesses of all sizes. "What we do is take our clients vision, and provide all the ingredients of a seamless and transparent communications solution - hardware, software, cabling, lines, and service. Leaving them free to concentrate on what matters most - their customers," according to Dominic.

Continues Dominic: "Where companies have multiple sites we can provide our own unique product that we can deliver, and bill clients quarterly. We look at providing the complete solution. So our business is very diverse, therefore we had to create our own billing system. That is where Linear Blue came in. In 1998 we took over a dealership that was using a solution written in FileMaker 3. We were using a paper-based system but decided to adopt and integrate the FileMaker system with our existing systems. Initially we didn't realise the full potential of the system, and so we looked at other products and also investigated finding someone who could build on our existing system.

"What we decided to do was to find a developer who could take the very limited way we were using FileMaker and develop it and us into the powerful system you see today. "FileMaker is like a blank piece of paper. You need to decide how business processes are needed to work within FileMaker and how it would work for us. That is where Linear Blue stepped in. They designed what we needed and now the system really drives the entire business."

SwitchIP, one of the UK's most innovative IT networking and communications companies, was formed in January 2004 as a subsidiary of Switch Communications. With its groundbreaking InPurple product – the first network to deliver voice, data and real-time video conferencing over a single broadband connection – SwitchIP has distinguished itself from its competitors and won significant contracts in a highly competitive and volatile market sector. The company's clients span the retail, manufacturing, leisure and voluntary sectors and include Knight Frank, Virgin Active, Diabetes UK and The Bollom Group. Through parent company, Switch Communications, SwitchIP enjoys close working relationships with Alcatel, Cisco and BT – and was appointed as a BT Wholesale partner in its own right in August 2004. With its creation came specific business requirements, which Linear Blue and FileMaker were able to fulfil.

## Successful solution

The Communiqué product was born in 2001 with a successful implementation across the business. Now in 2005 Linear Blue has re-written Communiqué, from the ground up, in FileMaker Pro 7. The new features include a full Diary system with links to installations of jobs, engineer allocation and staff holidays – alongside Outlook integration. With this version Linear Blue were asked to include enhanced user input control in the form of Wizards; this allowed the system to guide users into entering complex data in an easy manner, that helps avoid data errors.

“Everything is driven by Communiqué. The complete database records all jobs raised within the system, it runs our stock control, all purchasing is done through the system, we invoice our clients through the system, and we created a diary to control resources. The diary is a very powerful business tool for us, as it controls all the differing resources – from assigning the engineer through to the type of job it is, and the equipment needed and used. We needed to build the system so we could provide quarterly billing, especially important for SwitchIP. The ability to forecast multiple rentals invoicing for long term contracts, was another key requirement. As we have ISO 9000 it is very important that we can keep and raise accurate and detailed reports such as suppliers’ statistics.

This is obviously very important for our business, but it is also a powerful tool to offer clients. They can have their reports created exactly how they need them to be and as often as they need. We also have a robot machine which can generate lots of reports and invoices automatically,” continues Dominic.

## Customer benefits

“What I like about FileMaker is that if we need something it can be designed very quickly – and cost effectively,” says Dominic. “This flexibility means that it can be tailored to whatever we need and to customers’ requirements. Linear Blue has designed the system so there are access privileges so not everyone can see invoices, stock in/out for example. Linear Blue clearly understood our business requirements and was able to provide the solution we needed, and I am confident that our billing system is the best that’s out there.”

“We have over 1400 customers and it is important that we are always exceeding their requirements. That is why in January 2006 we launched our Web access system, integrated with Communiqué. Our customers are be able to see all live service calls and where they are in the process.”

“Each time FileMaker has upgraded we have seen great new features. I am particularly happy with the improvements in processing power, which means that I have to spend less money on programming time. In the past one request may take a weeks programming time, something similar now only takes one day. FileMaker’s time-saving development features and increased customisation capabilities mean that we are able to improve our Communiqué product, without huge development costs.”

## About Linear Blue Ltd.

Linear Blue provide the highest quality FileMaker solutions in the UK market today. Our experience in advanced database design and web technologies allows us to develop innovative and effective ways of managing your information and business resources. Our highly motivated team of talented individuals is focused on continuous improvement and commitment to excellence.

## About FileMaker, Inc.

FileMaker Pro is used by millions of individuals and workgroups around the world to be more productive and efficient. Business, education and government customers rely on FileMaker to manage people, projects, images, assets and other information. In addition to being the number one-selling easy-to-use database software, the award-winning FileMaker product line also includes low-cost Applications that automate basic business tasks, ready-to-use Starter Solutions, and tools to create and share solutions from the desktop to the web. FileMaker, Inc. is a subsidiary of Apple Computer, Inc.

