



CASE STUDY: GOSPEL FOR ASIA

State-of-the-Art Technology Helps a Nonprofit Fulfill Its Mission

by Stephen Schaphorst

The mission of Gospel for Asia, a nonprofit organization based in Carrollton, Texas, is to establish churches among the two billion unreached people of Asia. The task requires an enormous amount of resources and requires us to place a high priority on streamlining our tasks and lowering our costs. That was the driving force behind our decision to implement an automated check and payment processing solution from AQ2 Technologies.

In the past, gifts to Gospel for Asia (GFA) were manually processed by four full-time staff members and several volunteers. Like most nonprofit organizations, our peak volume month is December, when we process between 20,000 and 25,000 gifts. During that month, we often logged in 12-hour days and required assistance from other departments. Despite our best efforts, GFA typically was several days behind in processing donor gifts.

The problem was compounded by the tremendous amount of time and space required to archive (and in some cases, copy and distribute to other departments) checks and related documents. When donors called with a question regarding a payment, they were put on hold while staff hunted down the actual check.

Choosing AQ2

The combination of our growing donation volume (14 percent over the past year) and small staff prompted GFA to begin an extensive search in November 2001 for a solution that would automate payment processing and streamline check archival and research. Led by our director of information technology, GFA used industry web sites and information from another nonprofit organization to research major providers of automated processing solutions.

Gospel for Asia ultimately selected AQ2, which is based in Birmingham, Ala. Several factors weighed heavily in favor of AQ2, including the feature-functionality of its automated processing solution, a tour of one of its customer sites in Chicago, and its commitment to organizations of all sizes. We were also pleased to discover that the company's founder, Dwight Martin, came from a missionary background.

The AQURIT Difference

Automating gift entry has revolutionized our department; we are now able to process over 80 percent of our donations on the day they are received. This has been made possible by the state-

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of-the-art design of AQ2's payment processing solution, called AQURIT. AQURIT runs on the industry-standard Microsoft Windows platform and uses leading-edge components such as a SQL Server. This open platform gave us piece of mind that the system would be easy to support and would grow with our organization.

GFA was also impressed with AQURIT's robust standard features, including the built-in module for courtesy amount recognition (CAR) and legal amount recognition (LAR). This component automatically extracts the amounts on checks, eliminating time-consuming manual data entry. Competitors offered only so-called "read-and-key" capabilities, which still requires keying of check amounts, delivering only marginal labor savings. AQURIT's automation in this area has helped us double the number of gifts our staff processes daily.

AQURIT also provides tables that allow us to store the MICR information from the bottom of donor checks, significantly streamlining the process of preparing receipts for donors. Unlike most payment processors, GFA sends receipts to the individual who wrote the check, regardless of the name on the remittance stub. Using AQURIT, we created tables linking the bank account number from the MICR line on a donor's check to the ID number we assign them. For regular donors who send gifts using the same checking account, this eliminates the tedious process of manually cross-matching gift checks with donor ID numbers on file and then photocopying checks for our records. With this capability, GFA now mails most receipts within 24 hours of the gift being processed.

In addition, AQURIT's ability to archive digital images of checks and related documents has eliminated the need to copy or store paper documents. Faced with a requirement to archive checks for three years, GFA previously stored paper documents in shoebox-like containers, which meant we relied on staff to file the documents correctly and return them to the right spot when they were used for research or other departmental purposes. Archiving images, rather than paper, enables authorized staff with a PC connected to the AQURIT network to retrieve images of checks and documents within minutes, ensures that the checks are always readily available, and reduces our physical storage space requirements.

In the near future, GFA plans to use AQURIT to automate the handling of subscriptions to our magazine as well as orders for our literature and other materials.

Stephen Schaphorst is the gift entry coordinator for Gospel for Asia, a nonprofit organization based in Carrollton, Texas. He can be reached at 972.300.7777 or via e-mail at stephens@gfa.org.