TOSHIBA

Case Study: Aico

Automating order processing, saves time, reduces errors and improves operational efficiency.





Knowledge On Demand

Revolutionising Workflow: How Aico transformed order processing with Business Process Automation from Toshiba's cutting-edge workplace solutions portfolio.

Aico, an Ei Company and member of the Electrical Distributors' Association, was founded in 1990 by Ken Ainsworth, with the name originating from Ainsworth Company. Over the last 35 years they have grown to become the European market-leader in home life safety, pioneering new technologies and offering high-quality products designed, developed, and manufactured at their factory in Shannon, Ireland.

Education, quality, service, and innovation are at the heart of everything they do, and they are extremely proud of their high standards both in products and the company. When working with customers, or within the community, they always follow the same philosophy. Their reputation is built not only on producing the highest quality alarms but also through passionate people, continued innovation, exceptional service, and unrivalled support.

A plan to reduce workload

With over 60,000 orders placed annually, nearly 10% of Aico's workforce was dedicated to manually processing this high volume of transactions. In addition to handling order-related queries, this team also served as the primary customer service unit, managing all incoming enquiries across the company. Kelly Hodgetts, Customer Service Manager, spoke about the decision to look at an automated solution. "As our business continued to grow, the volume of incoming orders steadily increased year on year. Eventually, we required a team of eight employees dedicated to manually processing orders to keep pace with demand.

To address this, we initiated a project aimed at automating the order entry process. We implemented two key solutions to streamline operations and allow our staff to focus on more customer-centric tasks. First, we introduced a web portal for customers to manually submit orders directly. Second, we deployed an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) solution to efficiently handle the large volume of PDF orders received via our inbox."

After several months of using the new OCR solution for automated order entry into Sage, it became clear that the software was cumbersome, overly complex, and not user-friendly. Despite the initial promise, it fell short of expectations and required significant manual intervention to function effectively. Additionally, Aico experienced minimal support from the provider, with little to no customer service to assist in resolving ongoing issues.



A powerful automation tool that accelerates order turnaround times and enhances operational visibility.

Fit for purpose

Aico was aware that Toshiba had similar products as part of their workplace solution portfolio, so they sought their advice initially to see if they had a solution with the functionality that would meet their required outcomes. Gareth Williams, Business Development Manager at Toshiba, commented on what sets their automated data capture software apart from other products in the market. “In addition to core functionality—automating order capture, validation, and entry - the AI based software significantly reduces errors, delays, and manual effort, integrating seamlessly with existing ERP systems. This ensures real-time data synchronisation and enhanced order accuracy, all without disrupting established processes. Designed for ease of use and management, it features intelligent mapping that continuously learns from complex PDF formats, resolving recurring issues efficiently. It’s a powerful automation tool that accelerates order turnaround times, enhances operational visibility, and elevates the overall customer experience.

After a series of collaborative workshops, Aico gained confidence that the automated data capture solution, in partnership with the Toshiba team, would successfully deliver the outcomes they originally envisioned at the start of their automation journey. Kelly continued on the decision, “We were thoroughly impressed with both the software and the Toshiba team. They took the time to deeply understand our existing systems and the specific challenges we were facing. They clearly demonstrated how AI based data capture automation could address these issues, enabling us to successfully process all PDF orders directly into Sage. The team showcased the platform’s ease of use, the flexibility of system configuration creation, and—perhaps most importantly—offered reassurance that dedicated support would always be available to assist with any questions or concerns we might have.”

Transition for savings

Aico initially chose to run the new software in parallel with their existing solution to ensure uninterrupted business operations. However, they were quickly impressed by its user-friendly interface, enhanced order visibility, and the speed and accuracy of processing. Within just a few days, the team made the decision to transition all order processing. Sadie, a colleague of Kelly, talked about the feedback from the customer service team: “The new solution was a breath of fresh air—it delivered exactly what we had hoped for. The integration with Sage was seamless, providing real-time updates and complete visibility across all orders. System training was straightforward, enabling us to achieve full order matching with zero manual intervention. Its intuitive design made it easy for every team member to use, regardless of technical experience, and we noticed an immediate boost in office morale as a result.”

Market-leading home life safety manufacturer, automate ordering to reduce order processing time by over 85%.

The automation of order processing has been a significant success for Aico, delivering substantial savings in both cost and operational efficiency. By streamlining this function, Aico was able to redeploy team members to more customer-focused roles, reducing the order processing team from eight to four without compromising service quality. Processing times have dropped from an average of four minutes per order to just 30 seconds, with improved accuracy. Additionally, with all orders now handled electronically, there's no longer a need to print or store paper copies increasing sustainability and efficiency whilst—making order retrieval quick and seamless, especially for audit purposes.

The system is robust. Everything is in one place and Aico now has a future-proofed platform that is scalable to the needs of the business.



"The project has delivered everything we hoped for—and more. The new solution is fast, reliable, accurate, and incredibly user-friendly, fully aligning with the high standards we uphold as a company. The implementation has been a complete success, and we've been consistently impressed with Toshiba from the initial pitch through to installation and ongoing support. They delivered exactly what was promised and guided us seamlessly through every stage of the process. We wouldn't hesitate to recommend them to any company considering their first step into automation."

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A leading supplier of workplace solutions, providing innovative technology, enabling value for our customers, in every workplace.

We work with our clients at all levels of their business to understand how we can help find better ways to create, share, store and distribute their knowledge.

Services include managed print services, barcode printing solutions, business process optimisation and effective document management software solutions, managed IT services and digital signage solutions. All designed to ensure a wide-range of industries operate more productively and effectively.

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