Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP successfully completes a multi-year CRM transformation supported by Validity DemandTools and BriteVerify.

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Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP (informally known as Freshfields) is an international law firm headquartered in London, United Kingdom. The firm has 29 offices across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. The firm advises national and multinational corporations, financial institutions, and governments.

The challenge:

Successfully completing a multi-year digital transformation project aimed at delivering richer client experiences.

Freshfields has long been considered a leader in the legal space. With more than 6,000 employees serving clients in 150+ countries, Freshfields helps execute cross-border transactions, mitigate operational risks, and simplify regulatory compliance.

However, the legal industry is highly competitive, and the rise of digital marketing made it more important than ever for Freshfields to stay top of mind with clients and prospects. As the industry evolved, the firm realized it was not enough to simply provide top-tier legal advice—they needed to deliver stellar client relationship management as well.

With this goal in mind, Freshfields decided to make a strategic investment in their client experience with Salesforce. "Prior to this project, our CRM was just a storage location of information that may or may not have been useful and may or may not be accurate. What we were using just didn't have the longevity we needed," said Craig Ashton-Chalmers, Senior Global Management of CRM and MarTech at Freshfields.

By combining their CRM, analytics, events, and marketing automation data in a new Salesforce instance, Freshfields hoped to deliver the relevant, personalized interactions that their clients had come to expect.

This was no small task (Freshfields is the first major law firm in the world to undergo a project of this kind) and the team knew the project wasn't as simple as importing their existing data into Salesforce.

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Rather than waiting for the quality of their database to deteriorate before pursuing a solution, Freshfields took a more proactive approach.

To build their new CRM on a foundation of clean data, the company chose to partner with Validity, the leading provider of data management and email deliverability solutions.

The solution:

The combined power of Validity BriteVerify and DemandTools.

Freshfields was unique in their understanding of data as a virtuous circle: better CRM data means better customer engagement, which means customers are even more willing to share higher-quality, more personal information. To set this circle in motion, Freshfields turned to Validity.

"Freshfield's data strategy is built around putting our clients first, and we provide multiple portals for them to engage with the business," said Ashton-Chalmers. "In building our new CRM with Salesforce, we would be the first legal company in the world to do so, and we absolutely didn't want to populate it with bad data!"

Freshfields first onboarded Validity BriteVerify, the industry's longest-standing contact verification solution. "An email address is the number one unique ID in every business and central to our CRM strategy. I don't treat the email address simply as a marketing point, it's a company placement indicator," explained Ashton-Chalmers. "If an email address bounces, there are two real reasons—the mailbox is full/not accepting emails, or the contact has left the company and the email is no longer valid. We need to deal with both scenarios in very different ways—but interestingly, these indicators could help us grow new relationships within the new company they have moved to," Ashton-Chalmers continued.

This in mind, Freshfields needed to be able to rely on the email addresses in their CRM system. "I didn't want to load all of our existing contacts into a new CRM at a time when I wasn't comfortable with the accuracy of our data," recalled Ashton-Chalmers.

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BriteVerify enabled Freshfields to validate contact information in real time at the point of capture to prevent invalid data from entering the database, and to perform bulk-verification of existing contacts.

"I started using BriteVerify to get a benchmark on current database accuracy, which would inform what to bring into Salesforce. We processed 175,000 contacts, but only 75,000 were valid," said Ashton-Chalmers.

Now, the firm verifies every single email in their system every week. "We need to know where our contacts are working, company-wise, at any given time so we can keep the relationship consistent or work on building a new one if our contact moved to a new firm," explained Ashton-Chalmers.

With their contact verification under control, Freshfields still needed a way to accomplish day-to-day data management tasks like deduplicating, standardizing, importing, and managing records.

While many organizations wait until their data quality has decayed to a catastrophic state before implementing a data quality solution, Freshfields decided to proactively onboard Validity DemandTools, the industry's most versatile and secure data management platform.

"DemandTools helps us identify existing data inaccuracies and eliminate gaps and inconsistencies," said Ashton-Chalmers. "Accurate data is imperative for us because we could miss important opportunities otherwise. We also have a strong desire to automate, and this is simply not achievable without top-quality data."

The platform's Import module enables Freshfields to keep their database clean (I.e., free of duplicates) when moving records in and out of Salesforce. The company also makes frequent use of their DemandTools reporting dashboard to quickly identify any other database issues.

These capabilities far exceeded native/free solutions offered by Salesforce and the broader data management ecosystem.

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The results:

An enhanced customer experience, significant boosts in email performance, and fewer resources needed for data management.

With Validity BriteVerify and DemandTools working alongside their new CRM, Freshfields saw quick uplifts in email performance.

Having an accurate, centralized, view of customer data allowed Freshfields to tailor campaigns based on client history and interests, test and personalize content in emails and event invitations, and gain visibility into email response rates—which meant lawyers could have more informed conversations with their clients.

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This personalized approach has contributed to an impressive 28 percent uplift in click-through rates for Freshfields' informational emails.

Furthermore, using connected data quality tools has increased Freshfields' inbox placement rate to a staggering 97 percent for all outbound emails— which is particularly noteworthy from a B2B sender. They are now looking to lock in this advantage by applying for Sender Certification—Validity's exclusive insurance policy for best-in-class senders.

The Freshfields team also realized considerable productivity gains from the new solutions.

Pre-Validity, the Freshfields team struggled to manage their database manually with a team of 12. Now the team can operate with just two database admins— the rest are reallocated to other more value-driving tasks within the business.

"Most of the work is done automatically with DemandTools, which is a huge timesaver," said Ashton-Chalmers. "We can build or amend the rules at any time and they will automatically update overnight."

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Senior Global Management of CRM and MarTech at Freshfields

With virtually all of their data quality routines automated, Freshfields can now take a management-by-exception approach, which frees up their time and resources to focus on other initiatives.

As an additional bonus, Freshfields' technology investment also helped them with recruitment. "We give the right tools to the right people at the right time—and it's actually helping us to attract top-tier talent," said Ashton-Chalmers.

Freshfields is currently the only major law firm in the world to have achieved this level of CRM sophistication—and they enjoy a major competitive advantage as a result.

"I work with many vendors, but there are only a couple of companies that are as important to fulfill our needs as Validity," said Ashton-Chalmers. "There are no alternatives!"

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