

# Allianz Cornhill Engineering Wires Home Workers, Achieves Return on Investment in 18 Months



Allianz Cornhill Engineering  
Hampshire, U.K.  
www.allianzcornhillengineering.co.uk

## Industry:

Engineering & Construction

## Employees:

500-1,999

## Oracle Products & Services:

Oracle Application Server  
Oracle Database  
Oracle Lite

## Key Benefits:

- Provides accurate information to the field
- Maximizes workers' time, so more inspections are performed
- Eliminates time spent re-keying information
- Minimizes system upgrade costs

*"Some of our home workers had never used a PC before. We were impressed by how quickly they were able to adapt to a system using Oracle Lite." -- Jane Terry, IT Manager, Allianz Cornhill Engineering, United Kingdom*

Based in Hampshire, England, Allianz Cornhill Engineering provides engineering inspection, insurance, and risk services for companies of all types and sizes throughout the United Kingdom. Its inspection services help customers meet their statutory and regulatory responsibilities, while its range of insurance solutions provides financial protection. In addition to its headquarters office in Hampshire, Allianz Cornhill Engineering operates a network of 420 engineer surveyor home workers based throughout the United Kingdom who carry out on-site inspection services for clients.

Before it upgraded its solution, home workers returned to their base at the end of each day either to type up and submit their reports to the head office or write them by hand for typing. This system was unwieldy and costly, so Allianz Cornhill Engineering sought a way to improve its reporting process and, as a result, provide a better service to its customers. Other key drivers for change included the need to reduce telephony and postal costs involved in the old system of information transfer and ensuring that home workers could work independently if the main database was unavailable. Allianz Cornhill Engineering chose to upgrade its Oracle Database platform and use Oracle Lite to achieve its goals. To provide design and support during the first year of implementation, Allianz Cornhill Engineering chose Alternative Business Solutions, a United Kingdom-based IT consulting firm. Given its history of hand-written and type-written reports, Alliance Cornhill Engineering knew it would have to introduce new technology slowly and carefully. "Some of our home workers had never used a PC before," said Jane Terry, Allianz Cornhill Engineering's IT manager.

## Why Oracle?

"When it came to addressing our business requirements we didn't consider any other products because we are happy with the Oracle

Database platform we've been using since 1997," Terry said. "Alternative Business Solutions was responsible for introducing us to Oracle Lite, and we were impressed by the way a remote database could integrate with our host database." Oracle Lite is a complete set of technologies for offline applications. Used with Oracle Application Server, it provides client-side representation and server-side management of data and applications in a lightweight, scalable framework.

Becoming Leading-Edge in Field Allianz Cornhill Engineering accesses Oracle Lite through a Visual Basic application that enables Allianz Cornhill Engineering's home workers to load their PCs with the information they require from the main database at head office. They can access existing data, enter new data, produce inspection reports, and synchronize with the main database overnight via ISDN lines installed in their homes. "The remote nature of the Oracle Lite application has imposed a strict release-management process on us," Terry said. "This regime, combined with a rigorous user acceptance test period, has provided unexpected benefits, both in terms of minimizing system upgrade costs and maintaining system quality." Before implementing Oracle Lite, Allianz Cornhill Engineering issued PCs to its home workers, in some cases a year in advance, to ensure maximum familiarity. It rolled out Oracle Lite, followed by a period of ratification. "At the time we were leading edge—no one else was using this new technology the way we were," Terry said. Allianz Cornhill Engineering was not just acquiring a technological edge; it was acquiring a financial edge as well. "Our cost-benefit analysis showed a return on our initial investment in less than 18 months, which we considered to be a short period of time for a project of this nature." Terry attributes this to several factors, notably that home workers spend more time on inspection visits and less time on administration. "One early benefit was that we bought all the PCs at the same time, so everyone is using the same model and kit. This means that when we test or upgrade the system, we do it using one set of equipment and can be confident no one will have compatibility issues. This saves us time and money we might otherwise have had to spend, and increases the level of service we are equipped to provide." Terry considers it significant that with only two days of formal training home

workers got on board with the new system. "We were impressed by how quickly our analyst programmers and home workers adapted to Oracle Lite, which is different from anything they had used before."