Rightmove

Data makes the difference for Rightmove's customer experience

Data quality and enhancement support the most accurate property listings

Partnering for a bespoke solution

Background

Rightmove is the UK's largest property portal and its mission is to empower decisions around property. This is via a sophisticated, yet simple property search platform that provides the largest, most accurate and comprehensive property listings. This delivers the best experience possible to those searching for a new home.

As you might imagine, Rightmove's success to date comes as a result of taking data seriously. Championed by senior leadership, it has a number of data and software teams, one of which is Data Platforms, led by Michelle Carr. She is tasked with managing datasets, quality of data, matching and appending additional information to existing data. Sitting at the heart of the organisation, it's fast becoming one of the most vital functions.

Challenges

As the largest property marketplace in the UK, Rightmove brings together property data from estate and lettings agents, as well as new homes developers into a single place. That means those looking for properties don't need to search elsewhere to get a complete view of the market.

One of Michelle's biggest challenges therefore is the huge variety of sources from which Rightmove receives data. The challenges are two-fold:

Data Quality: The quality of this data can vary to huge degrees. Often property information isn't complete, with missing postcodes or different formatting rules. There's no question that errors need to be fixed and the format standardised before it enters the central system.

Innovation: Providing additional information and features to enhance the level of insight it can provide against a property search is a key differentiator that relies on data accuracy. In simple terms, appending extra details to property information is dependent on being able to match the two together. Inaccurate or incomplete information makes that difficult.

Historically Michelle's team had used Experian's address cleansing software solution. The solution correctly matched addresses from the data it was receiving to verified reference data sources such as Royal Mail PAF and then cleanse them where required. Whilst happy, Michelle wanted to ensure that Rightmove stayed ahead of the game. She also wanted to solve specific challenges where traditional methods weren't as effective. These included matching against complicated numbers on Scottish flats, commercial properties or not yet built homes where postal codes aren't allocated quickly.

In parallel Michelle's team was also tasked with finding a way to merge data on school locations, ratings and makeup (e.g. boys to girls ratio, Diocese etc) into its search results. This level of detail would help Rightmove to provide really valuable insight on availability of schools - a major influencer in property purchase decisions for many families. As a data set that's not commonly available, the challenge was sourcing the right data and making it customisable to customer needs.

Solution

Thanks to an established partnership, Experian were well placed to understand the challenges and deliver solutions on two fronts:

1. Data Quality

Having considered other solutions, Michelle made a recommendation to retain Experian's address cleansing tool and upgrade to a new version which includes AddressBase® Premium.

It gives an accurate and up to date view of all addresses and non-addressable locations through their lifecycle. As a more granular dataset, it provides an additional layer of detail including a Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) code, an accurate reference that goes down to individual property level. This gives a better match rate, better confidence in the data and also solves many of the issues around identifying houses on new plots not yet built. According to Michelle:

"Experian's tools have supported us well in our journey so far. Upgrading to AddressBase® means we can keep the tools that are familiar to us but transition to the benefits of having the single definitive special address database for England, Scotland and Wales."

Rightmove

Rightmove kicked off a test phase to compare match rates using the existing tool vs. the upgrade. It was very important to have 100% confidence before integration to minimise any risk of interruption to service for customers.

Experian consultants provided comprehensive training, offering detailed guidance on how to use the platform's match codes. Rightmove were then able to define their own rules on what they deem to be an acceptable match vs. what isn't.

Phase one has seen Michelle's team use the solution to clean properties as they receive them in real time. Longer term there are also plans to clean large source files, like sold prices and beyond that there's an aspiration to roll it out to every team in receipt of datasets.

2. Schools data enhancement
Experian worked closely with the Rightmove team to scope and blend a series of bespoke data elements and the Edubase file to create a comprehensive and regularly updated source of data. Ticking the box for Michelle's team was about more than just the basics such as school address and location, it had to provide a complete suite of the information its customers need, like breakdown of Ofsted ratings, school makeup, religious type, CAMS team support etc.

Results
Michelle's team are clear on the benefits. Quicker, more efficient matching of data against AddressBase® Premium is saving time and improving the quality of the data. Such is the high profile nature of the project within the business that the team are expanding usage because they can see further opportunity.

"During our test phase we saw match rates increase by as much as 50%, which is going to have a big impact in the long term."

A second major benefit of working in partnership with Experian has been the opportunity to explore new ways to use data, products and services to improve Rightmove's offering to customers and fuel innovation. In particular, adding reliable schools data into the mix now gives customers the level of detail they've come to expect from Rightmove and keeps them coming back for more.

> "As a result of our partnership, Experian were well versed in exactly what data we needed. We were able to lean on their data assets and expertise to craft a more comprehensive market offering that makes our customers' experience more complete."

— **Michelle Carr,** Team Lead – Data Platforms, Rightmove

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