



# RedNews

The newsletter of Redwood Technologies

Summer 2011

## Headlines



**REDWOOD  
TECHNOLOGIES**

Welcome to the Summer 2011 edition of RedNews – a selection of Redwood’s top news stories from the last quarter, plus a special feature on how we are helping customers across the Utilities, Health and Travel sectors prepare their operations for the coming winter.

This issue we examine screen recording – a new Redwood solution that will enhance customer service and dispute resolution in contact centres and build on our rich portfolio in that sector.

As a new regulatory regime exerts increasing pressure on the world of finance, RedNews explores how Redwood will help firms prepare for a fast-approaching FSA deadline – keeping track of the media-hopping, smartphone-addicted banker.

We’re also proud to report on our latest efforts for good causes, including a charity shoot for children’s charity Starlight. And don’t miss our interview with colleague Philip Thornton, one of the many talented engineers at Redwood.

For more information please visit the website [www.redwoodtech.com](http://www.redwoodtech.com), email us at [info@redwoodtech.com](mailto:info@redwoodtech.com) or call on +[44] (0) 1344 304 344.

## TrainTracker Text: The message now arriving on platform two...

National Rail Enquiries (NRE) is the definitive source of information for the UK rail passenger. It’s their first port of call in any event – whether that’s planning the daily commute or navigating through a heavy snowfall. Handling an average 1.5 million journey queries every day across contact centres and a range of self-service channels, NRE is a colossus among travel information providers.

NRE is continually looking to improve its services offering and, as part of that process, it has launched a new SMS service, TrainTracker Text™ giving passengers on the move easier access to train timetable information. **storm**® – the communications integration platform – has been chosen to power it.

TrainTracker Text is an automated service that passengers can access from any location. A request from a mobile device to the number 84950 prompts a swift SMS response. One-line texts such as ‘arr Cambridge’, ‘dep Kings Cross’ or ‘York to Leeds’ trigger up-to-the-minute arrival and departure details – quite literally at passengers’ fingertips.

Tim Martin, National Rail Enquiries’ Online Programme Manager, describes the service:

“It’s crucial we reach passengers through the communication channels they prefer, wherever they are. But universal connectivity isn’t always possible on the go. We need to give passengers every opportunity to reach us if some of those connections are severed.

“It could be a poor network signal, background noise or simply etiquette. Sometimes it’s just not so



convenient or appropriate to speak on the phone or access the web.

“TrainTracker Text provides an extra connection. That’s why it’s such a crucial part of our travel toolkit – it’s useful in almost any scenario. All the passenger needs is a mobile phone and a minimal signal. With SMS they can access the same core function they see online, capturing the critical information they need to plan or adjust their journey.”

NRE’s ability to control the service with the **storm** interface is also fundamental to its success, as Tim Martin explains:

“At National Rail Enquiries, we often need to fine-tune our services within seconds, and we have to get it right. The **storm** portal gives us the means to adjust and improve the TrainTracker Text service as and when we see fit.

“We can adjust the rules which interpret misspellings in passengers’ texts. We can define in detail how we compact travel information within the single messages they receive in return. We can even change station names if we need to, without a long wait while the system’s reconfigured. Powerful management tools are essential given the complexity of what we have to achieve here, and **storm** is a key component in that control structure.”

### Track record

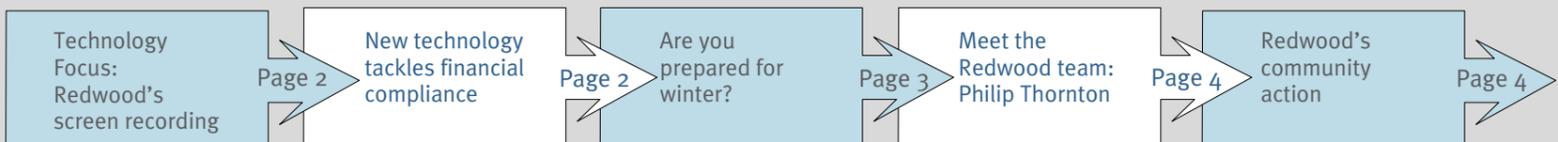
The pairing of TrainTracker Text and **storm** is the latest stage of a journey that started in 2009.

National Rail Enquiries was facing rising demand and also needed the flexibility and capacity to deal with the surges of call traffic that accompany unforeseen disruptions on the rail network.

**storm** was selected for intelligent, automated contact services in the cloud, which can cope with massive bursts in user demand. The Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) architecture allows NRE to protect its estate against planned and unplanned peaks in traffic, while sophisticated menu systems ensure a positive experience for the passenger.

When the heavy snowfall of winter 2010 provoked a five-fold increase in call traffic, **storm**’s burst capability made sure every enquiry was dealt with immediately, as IVR engaged each caller, providing the information they required.

Building on that well-established quality and reliability, TrainTracker Text provides a more convenient solution for those travelling by rail, and sets a strong example for other organisations seeking to adapt their communications to the increasingly mobile, multi-channel demands of their customers.



## Technology Focus: Screen recording drives customer service and quality assurance to new heights

**Redwood Technologies is releasing another technical capability layer for its highly popular range of contact centre solutions. A new screen recording facility will capture every second of a call agent's screen activity, providing a sophisticated new compliance and evaluation tool that will help a business resolve disputes more effectively and enhance their customer service.**

Provided either as a standalone solution or an integral module within the multi-award-winning RedRecorder™ suite, Redwood applications can now preserve both on-screen activity and call content, together.

Handing a client the opportunity both to 'view' and listen will contribute to rigorous compliance and dispute frameworks that govern communications in many sectors. Screen recording will also help an organisation train their staff to become more effective, call by call.

Redwood Senior Design Engineer, Martin Fung, explains:

"Screen recording reveals what steps a contact centre agent takes when dealing with a customer enquiry. This record, especially when provided integrally with voice recording, offers a crucial tool for compliance and quality assurance. A manager can analyse and thus improve the

processes an agent follows, boosting both service quality and efficiency from the bottom up. This kind of monitoring also helps reduce the risk of fraud, a big worry for any operation dealing with sensitive information.

"Redwood has a rich heritage in the contact centre sector and call recording is a crucial part of that story. By providing a screen recording service that is seamlessly integrated with voice, we're adding an extra dimension that will further refine a client's management of their customer-facing operation."



Martin also notes how the smallest changes can make a huge difference to customer service.

"The slightest fine-tuning can pay significant dividends when applied across the huge

volumes of transactions a contact centre may tackle every day.

"The ability to speed up and increase the accuracy of interactions with customers, for example in processing payments, can bring substantial revenue benefits to a business. These adjustments improve the customer experience and boost job satisfaction for call agents, too."

Additional features can also include real-time monitoring and on-demand 'hand-holding', whereby a manager takes control of an agent's mouse and keyboard remotely, actively supporting that agent as they progress through a call. This is another efficiency and customer satisfaction booster, saving the caller from a lengthy wait 'on hold' whilst an agent consults their supervisor or refers to a manual.

Screen recording is available as an on-site DNX solution or fully hosted in the cloud on **storm®**, the scalable Software-as-a-Service communications integration platform. Recordings are managed via an easy-to-use web portal – making arduous folder-trawling a thing of the past. Advanced encryption, developed in accordance with Redwood's ISO27001-accredited security procedures, means that a client can rest safe in the knowledge they are properly protecting their customers' data.

## Mobile phone recording for financial compliance

**14 November is looming large as the next big deadline for UK banks, as financial firms prepare to record every communication sent or received on a mobile phone.**

The directive comes from the country's regulator, the Financial Services Authority (FSA), which enforced its first set of 'taping rules' on 6 March 2009. Mobile was exempt from the original ruling, the watchdog says, "primarily [because] the technology to capture these communications was insufficiently developed". After three years of investment, the removal of the exemption is based on the presence of more advanced, affordable products in 2011.

Research and development at Redwood has played its part in this progress with a converged recording solution that combines mobile voice, SMS logging and the blocking of unauthorised phones. Aimed squarely at financial compliance,

the product has been designed so it can also link with fixed line and screen recording (see above).

The mobile phone exemption is the latest in a series of regulatory shake-ups instigated by the FSA. From Christmas Day 2010, UK firms dealing with mortgage arrears were required to record



all relevant calls and store them for three years. The Progressive – the UK's 11<sup>th</sup> largest building society – implemented a hosted Redwood recording solution to comply with the ruling. The affordability of the product was significant, as Progressive's Head of IT, Tommy O'Neill, confirms:

"Initial capital costs were significantly less than any other solution. Not only was the system rolled out rapidly in time to meet the regulatory deadline, it has continued to deliver increasing benefits, with operational costs considerably lower than we forecast."

With the expansion of converged recording to encompass on-premise, in-cloud and hybrid models, Redwood continues to play a leading role in the development of compliance-based recording solutions.

## Fix the roof while the sun is shining

**Europe may still be basking in summer sunshine, but Redwood Technologies is urging its customers to be ready for a harsh winter.**

Winter weather can mete out a range of severe practical challenges. Snow, ice, violent storms and flooding impact almost every organisation and individual. Redwood's clients are already making ready for these threats – with communications services to customers being high on the list of priorities.

Here we outline some of these challenges – and solutions – in overviews of three sectors: Utilities, Travel and Health.

### A harsh winter

The winter of 2010/2011 was one of the harshest Europe had faced in decades. Germany's transport network – renowned for its resilience – was left crippled under heavy snow, with hundreds of cancelled flights and a rash of traffic accidents in treacherous conditions. The Eurostar service was reduced to a trickle. In some areas of the UK, pipes froze, thawed and burst, leaving tens of thousands without running water. Across Europe, the weight of snow snapped power lines and left thousands without electricity.



Under intense media scrutiny and amid widespread public anger, ministers and CEOs readily admitted that exacerbating many of these crises was a lack of effective, coherent communication with the public.

### Utilities

For most customers, communication with utilities companies is limited to paying the bill. But when an unscheduled outage cuts off water, electricity or gas, how do customer helplines bend to meet the enormous pressure?

These events can amplify call volumes within a matter of minutes. Some contact centre infrastructures are robust enough to tackle the steady uplift that follows a prolonged period of cold weather, but still risk being overwhelmed when a major incident cuts services to thousands of households at the same time. Providers without the means to cope with these sudden surges inevitably risk long-term damage to their reputation.

In December 2010, a cold snap burst pipes and

meant that water supply was disrupted to 40,000 Northern Ireland Water customers. Its contact centres were unable to cope with the demand in enquiries and it is estimated that over 1 million call attempts to its helplines were made in under a week. That is the equivalent of more than 1 in every 2 members of the population making a call.

The handling of the event led to the resignation of its CEO Laurence MacKenzie, who wrote in his resignation letter: "I readily accept and recognise that there were aspects of the way in which we handled the situation that could have been better. In particular our ability to communicate with our customers and let them know the reasons for and the times at which they were going to be taken off supply. This failing added to the considerable inconvenience experienced by our customers."

To cope with such scenarios, many utilities companies are absorbing call surges by combining the burst capability of the cloud with IVR. UK Power Networks (formerly EDF Energy) uses a specialised Redwood solution for just this purpose. In a power cut, customers calling from an affected area are played information explaining the nature of the problem and how it is being rectified. SMS alerts are sent to affected customers as soon as an outage occurs. This drastically reduces the volume of incoming calls, which again frees advisors to focus on the more urgent, high-priority enquiries.

### Travel

Travel services face the same extreme fluctuations in demand. After the heavy snowfall last year, National Rail Enquiries (NRE, see page 1) saw inbound call volumes rocket to five times the normal level. Leveraging the capacity of Redwood's cloud platform, NRE maintained an unbroken information service and also ran a dedicated snow line, which took tens of thousands of calls in the first 24 hours.

### Health

Seasonal diseases such as swine flu pose serious problems, but they are not the only winter threats faced by healthcare authorities. For hospitals and clinics, general sickness and travel difficulties experienced by staff and patients can upset finely-balanced schedules, with complex knock-on effects.

Cloud systems are now warning patients of cancelled appointments by their preferred channel – email, SMS or recorded phone message. Using systems developed by Redwood, administrators can easily contact patients to confirm they can still attend, reducing unpredictable 'no shows' and better focusing resources. If specific health threats such as H1N1 do dictate swift changes in policy as regards admissions and hygiene, line managers can update patients immediately.

Requirements extend beyond wards and waiting



rooms. Absenteeism can prove troublesome for businesses in any sector, and hosted 'sickness management' is growing in popularity. Redwood cloud solutions can monitor day-to-day absence and support absent employees with IVR and SMS, providing helpful health advice. This proactive strategy can discourage unwarranted absenteeism and assist those who are genuinely unwell – promoting individual well-being and boosting the health of the organisation as a whole.

### Beyond the winter

The advantages of preparing for the winter months are clear to see. These types of services are also delivering benefits that transform the way organisations communicate all year round, as Irfan Habib, Redwood Business Development Manager, explains:

"It's clear that for any organisation working with a large body of stakeholders – whether customers, passengers or patients – incisive communication in a crisis is fundamental. It determines whether chaos reigns or order returns.

"But we shouldn't forget that the priorities faced in those extreme scenarios are important considerations at any time of year. Many organisations need to nurture stakeholder relationships on a daily basis, and cloud services let them do that across multiple channels with a high level of flexibility.

"Surges in call volumes can actually be a sign of success, as people respond to marketing campaigns or the launch of a new service. Hosted solutions can ensure organisations take full advantage of these opportunities and develop their influence without hindrance from inadequate infrastructure."



## The Redwood Team: An interview with Philip Thornton, Senior Applications Engineer



In this issue the spotlight falls on Philip Thornton, a developer whose work has been at the forefront of Redwood projects since he joined the team in 2003. With a degree in Mathematics and Physics from the University of York, Phil has always put an emphasis on logical process: "Problem solving is about breaking the

problem down into atomic units – such that it is as simple as possible – and then applying logic to move it forwards. It is always best practice to start from first principles and work from there, but never lose sight of the end goal."

### What is your role at Redwood?

I lead a team of engineers responsible for developing software for Redwood systems. I work on products and solutions ranging from customer-premise systems such as RedMatrix™ – used in mission-critical banking and government environments – through to cloud-based solutions such as those running on **storm**®, Europe's largest multimedia communications integration platform.

I also provide support for software which has already been deployed. Sometimes identifying the cause of an issue can be like searching for a needle in a haystack. It can be easy to make assumptions, but I always try to focus on the evidence at hand.

### What do you find challenging?

Working across the product and project teams, it can be quite a balancing act. We are always

driving our projects forwards, pushing new technologies and features. We also have to ensure we never lose sight of our customers' needs, which are very specific.

### What is the most rewarding aspect of your role?

I can be involved in every stage of a project delivery, from design through to launch. It is extremely satisfying to see a solution grow and finally go live. At Redwood, there has always been an individual-driven culture and this has only strengthened over the years. We have a very talented team, so there is a great deal of mutual respect between departments.

### Where do you see the future for Redwood?

I was initially attracted to Redwood because as a company they were – and still are – at the forefront of technology. It is deep within the culture to adopt and drive forward new technologies, and this won't change any time soon. Redwood is always devising unique, cutting-edge solutions to help its customers and develop its portfolio – so I'm looking forward to tackling new opportunities both in the UK and abroad.

## Starlight in Redwood's sights for charity shoot

**Hotshots from Redwood once more raised their guns in support of Starlight, the children's charity that grants the wishes of seriously and terminally ill youngsters across the UK.**

Highclere Castle was the impressive backdrop for the annual Starlight Shooting Challenge, with the Redwood contingent – comprising both staff and clients – competing for glory across the stunning Berkshire estate.

The team contributed prizes for an auction in the Castle, and then joined opponents in a furious round of bidding, spending £10,000 in support of Starlight.

Funds raised at this year's shoot have pushed

the overall total to an impressive £1.5 million since the event began nine years ago – a tremendous boost for a charity that Martin Taylor, Director of Redwood, holds in high esteem.

"Starlight is such a great charity because it helps bring some happiness to children when they're suffering from circumstances completely outside their control," Martin says.

"The historic surroundings made for a great day, and we were only too happy to help raise more money."

In other news, Redwood has contributed funds to support the vehicle fleet of Swallowfield Community Responders, a first response service

for medical emergencies in South Berkshire. With any life-threatening condition, the first 10 minutes is the most crucial time – and with a fleet of ambulances and specially-trained volunteers, SCR helps save lives.



**From L to R:** Mark Frey - Gorgeousshop Director, Martin Taylor - Redwood Director, Sean Taylor - Redwood Director & Edward Winfield - Cable&Wireless Worldwide

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