Estate Agents

Problems of a paper based office

Introduction

An estate agent based in a paper-based office comes across a lot of problems. It necessary to solve these problems and try to bring the system of the basic system and improve to be more efficient and more reliable in a working area. The firm is in an area that is equally part urban and part rural. Further more because of this area people are constantly moving in and out of the town. The estate agents have asked for our help to be able to cope with this type of ever-flowing business

- The employees desk may well be covered in paper work.
- Obviously pieces of information are going to get lost.
- Also files and information are going to be mixed.
- Furthermore when you receive notice of a house that needs to be sold, the estate agents will have to make a new record for the estate agents to view details of this house.

In order to help me understand the problems that an estate agent was having, I needed to understand what problems they were really struggling with so I asked with great consideration (appendix 1)

Collecting data

The estate agent must collect a variety of sources. Also in an estate agents you have to learn to take down every bit of information. All the information that you give to your customers equals more money. A problem that may occur is collecting information about the customer's details. This is time consuming because you have to find the name, try to understand it then change certain areas that need to be. This task would be repeated more than five times a day, this would make this task very frustrating.

Storing Data

A lot of space and filing cabinets are needed if you do not have a computer when storing. When your estate agents gets popular, a lot more people will want your estate agents to find houses. This will make it harder organising the data. Which also gives the problem of whether other employees can understand it. Also a big problem is if there were a fire all the data would be lost. Also with storing data, only one person can use it at one time and there is not a backup

Retrieving Data

Retrieving Data could be difficult and may waste time if the files were put into the wrong order or, because the whole filing system may be wrong then it will have to be sorted out into that correct order. Meanwhile you are still trying to find the file you would like. It can be easily destroyed, a mess and unable to read. Even worse it can be incorrect and if it is important it could make the Estate Agents job more difficult than it already is.

Outputting Data

When using and changing data it can become a mess if it is hand-written. When using Data if somebody else apart from you writes it could be part unable to read. Changing data can cause this, just imagine you have two people that want to swap houses and one of them live in a street almost the same as another customer. These leads to other problems, you first have to find the data, then change or destroy it. This can also cause a great mix-up in the two addresses When Changing data you will have to cross out words for a start or have tip-ex which causes a great mess and also wasting a lot of time. Also as well as no extras that you can have on a typewriter, It is harder to delete Words, letters etc.

Process	Problems
Collecting data	• Recording information on a scrap piece of paper, the piece of paper might get lost. Information can be easily destroyed, messy and may be difficult for other employees to read.
	• Collecting Data from someone over the phone may take time.
Storing data	• Files are stored in filing cabinet; these will take a lot of space.
	• Files would have to be copied into neat. These will take time.
	• It takes time to put the files in the correct place.
Retrieving data	• Files may be put in the wrong order
Outputting data	• May be messy from when an employee has retrieved data
	• Can easily get mixed up by files that

	are alike.

Analysis

Different methods that could be used would be using an electronic package such as a computer to save time and effort and avoid a lot of mistakes that are happening now.

Feasibility

Collecting data

1) Collect the data from the customers at the estate agents and recording the data on a form view on a computer.
   This would be at an advantage because forms can be easily read. Data can be easily entered but would be difficult to protect from other employees. JAMES
2) Visit the customer's house and retrieve data using a data capture form.
   -Or-
   Take a portable computer e.g. laptop, to record data from the customer.
   (Disadvantage: this cost a lot of money.)

Storing

1) Non-specialist program e.g. Access

Advantage	Disadvantage
• Cheap	• Not specific to Estate Agents
• Easy to use	
• Can be altered	
• Flexible	

2) Specialists Package

Advantage	Disadvantage
• Specific	• Expensive
• Solve problems	• New system must be learned
• Should be more relevant	• Training needed
	• Maybe some things that are not totally relevant
	• Could be more difficult to use
	• More expensive
	• Maybe harder to find
	• Difficult to find

3) Getting a specialist to write a program for you.

Advantage	Disadvantage
• You decide what you want	• Harder to find designer
	• Costs a lot

4) Microfiche

Advantage	Disadvantage
• Easy to use	• No back up
• Cheap	• Manual slow
• No training needed	• Open to human error

• No specialists	• Maybe hard to find one
	• Limited space
	• Difficult to alter records
	• Only one at a time

      We have chosen the non-specialist package because it is technically feasible. It is economically feasible because it does not cost as much as the specialist package. Although it costs more than the microfiche, it benefits us better because it is easy to use, easy to find and is flexible.

      The non-specialist package also has fewer disadvantages than the specialist package and the microfiche. The non-specialist package's disadvantage is that it is not specific to the Estate Agents and it is liable to crash. It also has the most advantages out of the three.

      After buying the computer and certain packages, other items need to be bought. One of these items is a printer.
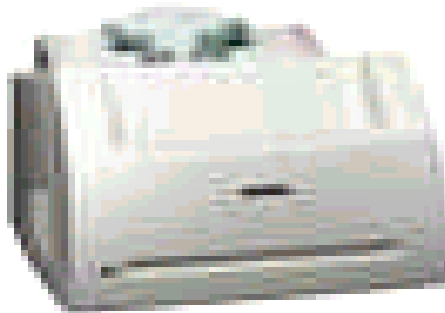
Samsung Izzi plus Laser Printer
Price inc. VAT £199.99
Is the cheapest printer that was found.

Design
      Some of the objectives of the design phase are as follows:
- To be able to access the database quickly (preferably under a minute.).
- To be able to retrieve specific data using questions (preferably in less than two minutes.).
- To be able to retrieve data a print out a report in under 2 minutes.

Giving out data as a data capture form is a quick and easy way of collecting data. It is also easier to read if the sheet has boxes for the reader to fill by the reader using block capitals and having multi-choice questions to tick.

Storing data will be much easier if a computer is involved. If a mistake is made then it can be changed while still being neat, but if you make a mistake on paper, to keep it neat you will have to re-write it all again.

The retrieving of data is much easier when it is in the form of a query. This can be accessed through Microsoft Access, which can filter out information wanted by the user.

Using and changing data can be done easily and efficiently when using a P.C. It can be easily read and is a lot neater and doesn't take a lot of time. Always make sure you have a backup in case the information has to be changed or something happens to the computer e.g. Computer virus.

Analysis

Collecting data from other companies is the thing you need in order for your own business to succeed. Don't just use their ideas add some of your own. Collecting data is a fast and easy way if you have a computer. It is a lot harder if you do not have a computer and also takes up a lot more time e.g. it will have to be hand written and rushing can make your handwriting very scruffy and untidy.

You need a lot of space and filing cabinets if you have a paper based office when storing information. There is also the problem of having the right information. When your business grows, your shop space will also need to grow (if it can). It will also be a lot harder organising the data. Which also gives the problem of whether other employees can understand it.

When retrieving data it can be easily destroyed and a mess and unable to be read. Even worse it can be incorrect and if it is important it could destroy your whole business. Which could make you deeply in debt. If files that play a big part in your business get lost, this mistake could destroy the business.

When outputting data it could waste valuable time and if a mistake is made while writing a document you would have to write all over again to make it more readable and neatly organised. If you have a lot of customers and you have some information to give out to your customers you have to re-write all of your letters to each individual customer and this method could take weeks.

Implement

Collecting data is easy and efficient when using data capture forms. Data capture forms allow the customer to fill in the form using block capitals which is easy for the customer to fill in and is also easy for the sender to read as some handwriting is hard to read by others. Below is the capture form half created for handing out to customers - (appendix A)

Then I had to create another data capture form for employees to use when finding houses (appendix B)

When I had retrieved all the data I needed, I then stored it in Microsoft access as a table because I could enter and retrieve data quite fast and easily. Again below are two tables showing customers and information from houses - (appendix C)

Microsoft Access - [Customers : Table]

ID	Title	First name	Surname	Phone numbe	Address 1		Address 2	Addres
31	Mrs	Nora	Breeast	09609505050		69	Milky lane	Mianus
13	Mr	Zoe	Brown	01458234489		5	Swan Close	Basildon
19	Mr	Dexter	Carver	0208976354		86	Oxford Road	Stratford
29	Miss	Holly	Crawford	01708508883		58	Elizabeth road	Rainham
18	Mr	Ben	Dover	01708546378		12	Cardboard lane	Romford
27	Mrs	Ileane	Dover	0207088899		54	Sesame Street	London
5	Mr	Rudeen	February	01708523581		31	Louise Gardens	Rainham
20	Mr	Leon	February	0208654789		128	Carpenters road	Stratford
26	Mrs	Enola	Gay	011142366733		15	Coronation Street	Manchester
9	Master	Nathan	Gibbons	01708850689		75	Carnach Green	South Ockeno
8	Mrs	Denise	Gibbons	01708850689		75	Carnach Green	South ockend
24	Miss	Amy	Green			1	Windsor Drive	London
3	Ms	James	Greenaway	01708864697		15	Myrtle Grove	Aveley
12	Mrs	Brett	Hanks	01708863557		13	Linnet way	Purfleet
11	Mr	Nora	Houghton	01708866299		56	Central Avenue	Aveley
14	Mr	Richard	Hubbard	02076398823		73	King's street lane	East ham
23	Miss	Francesca	Jones			34	Cortworth road	Ecclesall
17	Mr	Robert	Loukes	01708552811		69	Chafford school	Rainham
10	Mr	Matthew	Ludlow	01708866915		26	Rowan Grove	Aveley
1	Ms	Paul	Marshall	020898486980		25	Auriel Avenue	Dagenham
16	Miss	Lucy	Marshall	02089848698		25	Auriel Avenue	Dagenham
7	Mr	Chris	Parry	01708525054		7	Bulmer walk	Rainham
30	Miss	Mark	Reemer	01708508597		23	Twats Road	Rainham

Record: 1 of 31   Datasheet View   NUM

This is what the customers' table looks like. On the next page is the house information table- (appendix D)


Microsoft Access - [House : Table]

Owner ID	Owner first name	Owner surname	House Address 1		House Address 2	House Address 3
1	Joe	Arthure		26	Brookway	Aveley essex
2	Mace	Agar		32	Elizabeth Road	Rainham Essex
3	John	Black		20	Lambs Lane	South Ockendon Essex
4	Arthur	Wilton		48	Davis Road	Greater London
5	Billy	Barber		8	South Hall Drive	Bromley-by-Bow London
6	Dextor	Smith		36	Mill lane	Aveley Essex
7	Jamain	Lowry		14	Louise Gardens	Walton-on-thames
8	Pauline	Potter		33	Trafalgar Square	Upton Park London
9	Jimmy	Turner		57	Ye New Road	Greater London
10	Stephen	Roswell		666	Beezil Bob Road	Walton-on-thames
11	Mercedes	Hogan		25	Rowan Grove	Greater London
12	Nadia	Small		29	Baker Street	Barking Essex
13	Alex	Mills		29	Byker Grove	Greater London
14	Nathan	Gawley		17	Dowling Street	Battersea London
15	Cleo	Clark		30	Brights Avenue	Hornchurch Essex
16	Haille	Derek		32	Ship Lane	South Kenningston Lonc
17	Robert	Coutts		34	Hall Road	Upton Park London
18	Clint	Hanks		36	Love Lane	Buckingham London
19	Kirk	Hunt		26	Ribena Street	WhiteChapel London
20	Brett	Hili		40	Roxwell Road	Greater London
21	Gabe	Kaur		42	Oxford Street	Fenchurch London
22	Connor	Corneil		44	St James's Road	Highbury-Park London
23	Brad	Warman		46	St James's Road	Highbury-park London
24	David	Porter		1084	Albert Square	South Kenningston Lonc
25	Jamie	Stacey		5	Ye old Lane	Rainham Essex

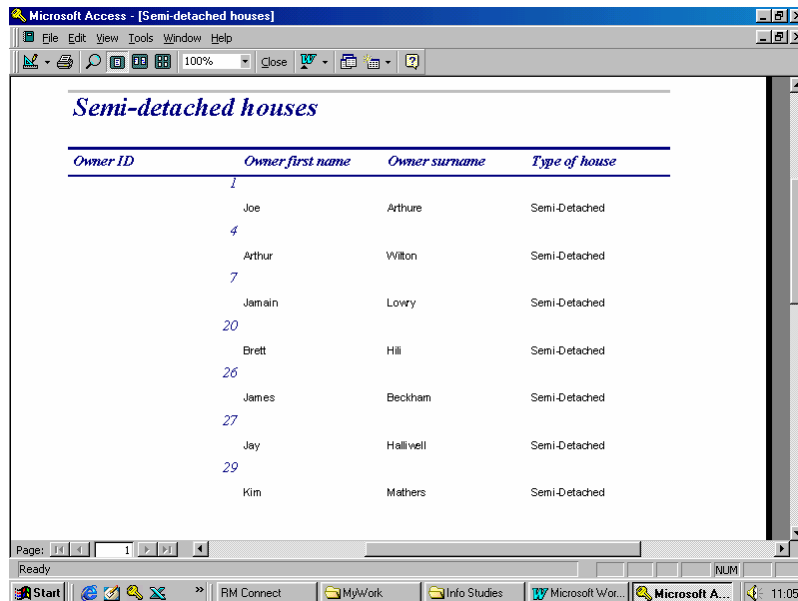Record: 1 of 31   Employees ID   NUM

Below is what the tables started off like using access and then going into design view.
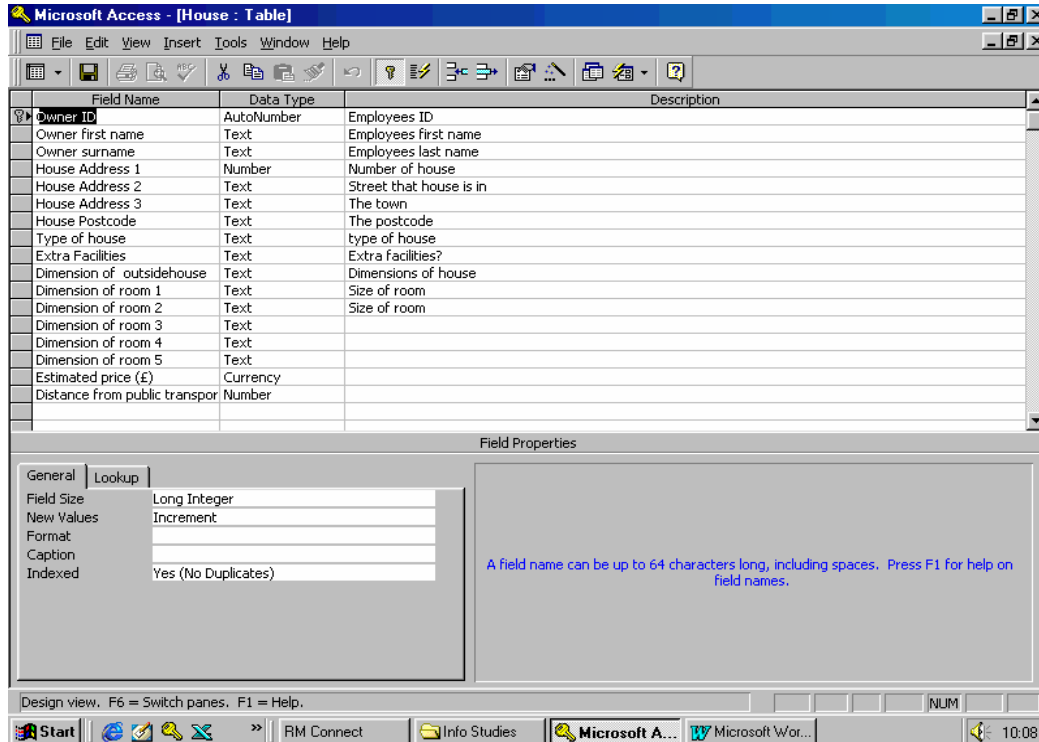
Retrieving data was done through Microsoft Access. I would make a search for the information that I needed and then I would use it. A faster way to find information is to make a query to find a certain person or people that I needed from a particular group. The design view is as shown-

BY James Greenaway
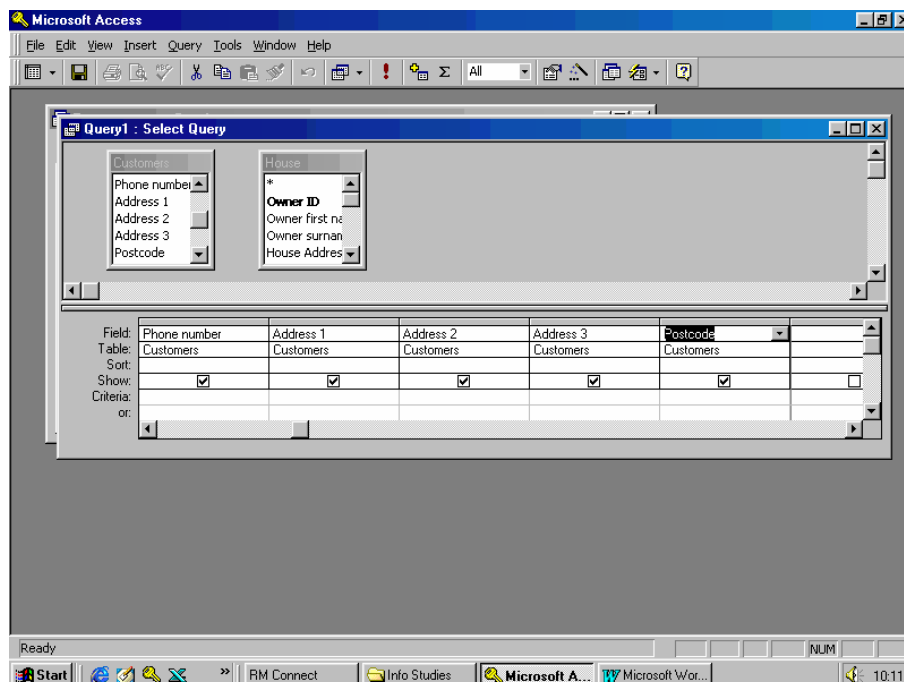
The query is shown (appendix E). Also I needed a report that employees could get to easily as seen below I used 'owners with semi-detached houses' as an example (appendix F)

Using Microsoft Word then creating a mail merge letter using information from the forms made in Microsoft Access carried out outputting data. Then I had type a certain document that I needed and then the mail merge copied out the sufficient amount of letters needed for all the customers in that certain document.

Test	What is tested	How its tested	Results of test	Action taken
1	Is there enough boxes for a long name	Put in a long name	Number of boxes was not long enough	Made more boxes
2	Problem of gender	Check if finding gender is easy	A name was both a boys name and a girls name	Made a new section which was named 'Title'
3	Is the font size big enough	Check if it can be read	You could only read part of it	Made the font size smaller
4	Are all the boxes in line	Check if all the boxes were in line	Some of them were slanted	Made them straight
5	Was there too many boxes	Check if there was a lot left	There was a lot left	Deleted excess boxes
6	Is the database work in line with the Data capture form	Compare the two	Yes	-
7	Are the lines at the bottom seen	Check if the lines can be seen	Lines were too dark	Made the lines brighter
8	Was there an efficient amount information to be seen on the form	Check if the information that I needed was there	There was enough information	-
9	Did the query work	Check it worked	It did work	-
10	Are the box sizes the same	Compare the size of the boxes	Some of the boxes were bigger than others	Made one box and then used Ctrl C and Ctrl V to copy and paste
11	Check if there were validation rules	Put in data and see if it was within the rule	Some went over the validation rule and could not be entered	Change the validation rules so the data could be entered