



# *Euro-Profile*

*In-depth European IT Profiles*

## ***Abbey National***

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***Euro-Profile***

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# *Abbey National Profile*

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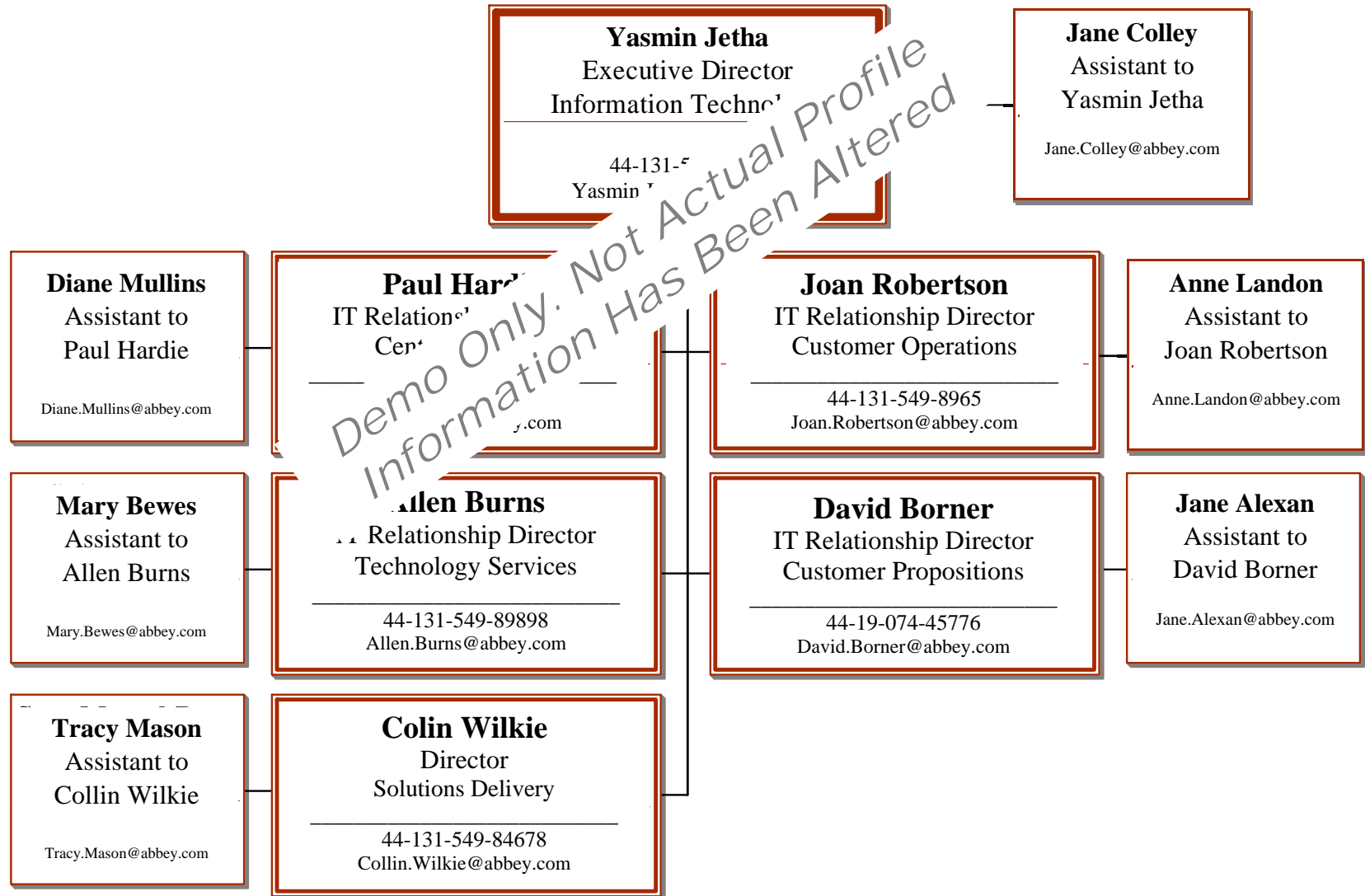
# Abbey National

## Executive Management



# Abbey National

## Senior IT Management



# Abbey National

## Customer Sales & Propositions

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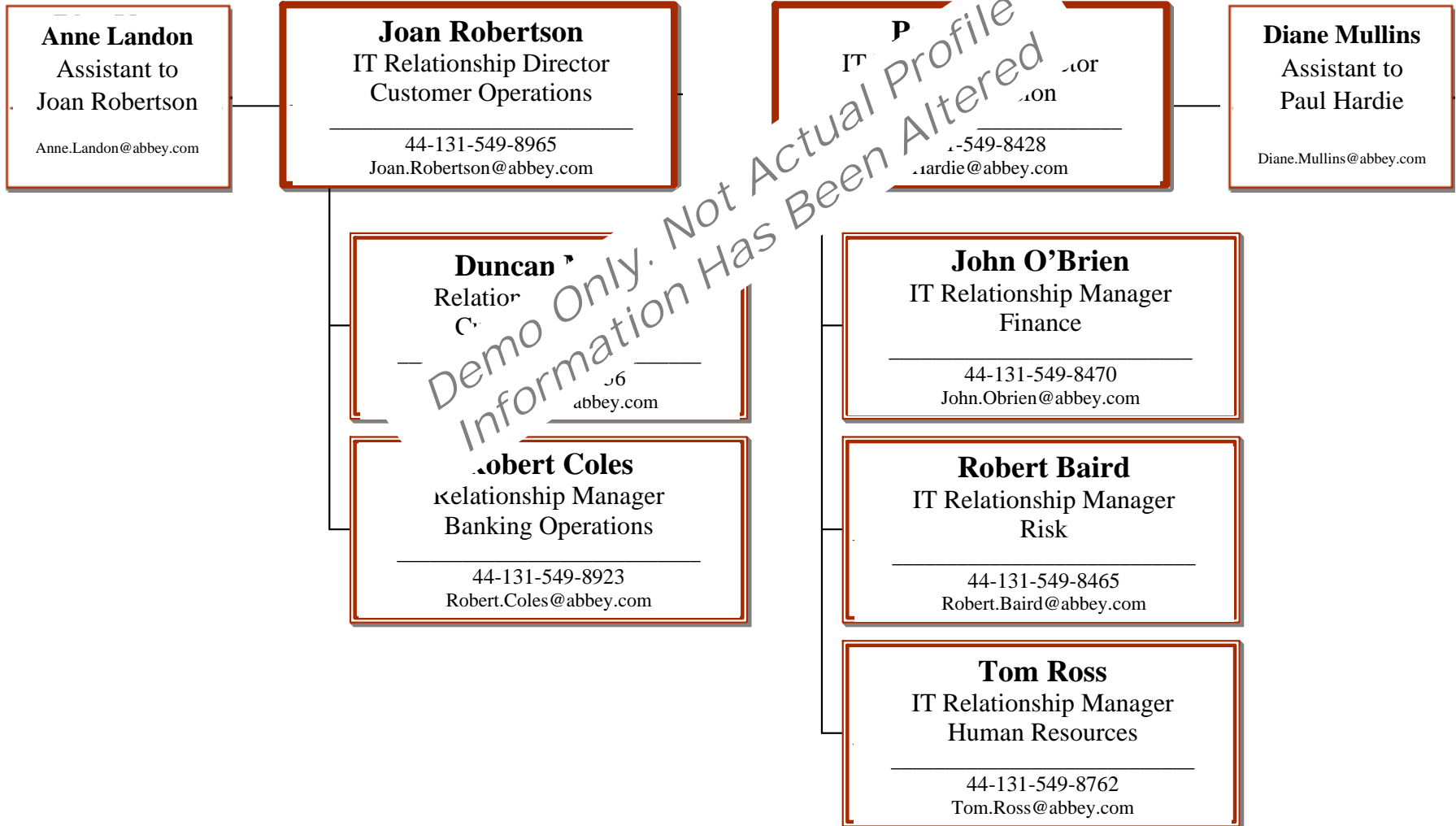
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# Abbey National

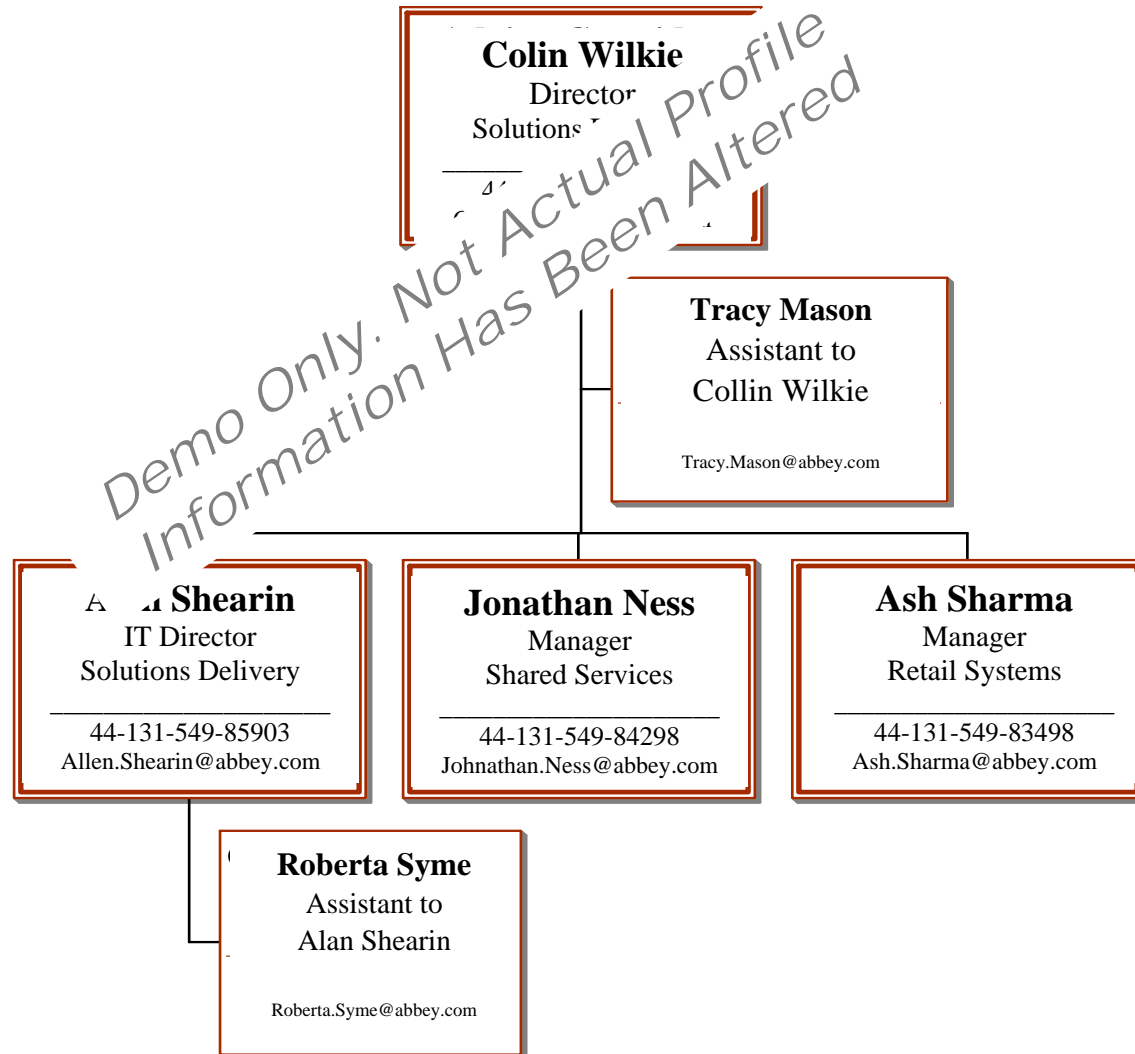
## IT Relationship Management

### Customer Operations, Finance, Risk & HR



# Abbey National

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# Abbey National

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## **IT Executive Background: Yasmin Jetha** **Executive Director, Information Technology**

*Yasmin Jetha joined Abbey in 1985, having worked previously at Lucas CAV and Nationwide Building Society. Previous positions include: Director, Corporate Systems; Director, Retail Service & Operations and Group IT & Infrastructure Director.*

*Yasmin Jetha was appointed an Executive Director at Abbey National in January 2001. She is now responsible for the Information Technology Division which covers IT of the company as well as procurement, property and*

Abbey National was a firm never far from the front pages of the business press in July 2002. Following the announcement that the FTSE 100 listed company looked likely to miss its earnings target, CEO Ian Harley stepped down and the stock spiralled to a two-year low. From chairman to cashier, the company has since been reassuring a fragile market that Abbey National continues to be a major player in financial services.

It is the board members who feel the resultant pressure first. They are the first to know the bad news and they are first to act; so confidence building and damage limitation are presumably all in a day's work for Yasmin Jetha, Group IT and Infrastructure Director, Imperial College Management School alumna, Asian Businesswoman of the Year 2001-2 and mother of two. Jetha is the only Asian woman currently holding such a high-level board position, managing more than 3000 members of staff.



This is all the more impressive when one considers the difficulty in striking a balance between such a role and the demands of children, but it is a juggling act at which she has clearly excelled. A lesson learnt at Imperial provides a clue to the secret of her success. She recalls: "The one thing that stuck in my mind was the very first lecture I received at Imperial. We were told: 'You are not going to be able to complete all the coursework that is set' - which was a strange thing to say to a group of people starting a new course."

Jetha and her peers were thenceforth prompted to refine the arts of time management. Her twelve months at Imperial taught her to "work smart", as she terms it. "On a course, sometimes you can spend ten hours or two hours to do a piece of work and end up with the same output. I think I learned to prioritise and manage my time exceedingly well", she says. She insists upon time management as a

# IT Executive Background: Yasmin Jetha

necessity and not a choice, and that this is as applicable today as it was in 1975. As she typically understates: "When you have two children and a career, you have to be very well organised." She has fond memories of Imperial and identifies the course (MSc in Management Science) and the diversity of her peers as highlights of her time here:

"It was a wonderful experience. What attracted me initially was the diverse range of topics that were covered - from marketing to accounting and operational research to financial management.

"There was lots of coursework to do, but it was extremely enjoyable and largely because I got the opportunity to engage with people from all backgrounds. With mature students, some who had worked elsewhere in financial services, some, like me, who had come straight from degree and foreign students as well. The course provided a cultural mix as well as the diversity of topics covered."

Jetha's education was born of the hard work and ambition of her parents. Her parents, both of Indian heritage, were born in India. Her father was Jetha in 1952. The family emigrated to the UK in the early 'seventies where her father was a contractor, primarily in the construction industry, while her mother was a teacher. Her father's schooling amounted to only four years of primary education and whilst this was no impediment to his business success, he was determined that his five children should benefit from the best education available to them. Thus it was that Jetha found herself taking A Levels at Loughborough High School, then a Maths degree at Westfield College, London before arriving at Imperial in 1975. On graduating from Imperial, Jetha spent the next decade on a graduate recruitment scheme with the manufacturing giant Lucas CAV and with the Nationwide Building Society, in IT. Still interested in maths and finance, it was with Lucas that she demonstrated her ability to take advantage of every hour available, taking her Cost and Management Accounting professional exams in her spare time. Jetha has since been conferred a Fellowship of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

In 1985 Jetha joined Abbey National where she has held various positions, including Director of Corporate Systems and Director of Retail Lending, culminating in her appointment as a full member of the

board of directors in January 2001. Then in May 2001 she was awarded the Asian Woman of Achievement Award in the 'Business Corporate' category and went on to win the Asian Businesswoman of the Year award in October of the same year - accolades she accepted with reservations.

She says: "When I was told that people wanted to nominate me I was a bit reluctant because I don't want the limelight - there is a lot of focus on the winner." However, more people nominated her, recognising the positive impact she could have both on her and on Abbey's profile. She is exceedingly proud of me and I was honoured to be part of it. There are so many women progressing in all areas, not just the Asian community."

There has been a case of learning to enjoy the inevitable media attention that the award has brought.

I don't shun the focus, but it can be time-consuming. If it actually helps others by giving examples of people who are seen to be successful, then that's good and it is a bit flattering, but it's not in the forefront of my mind. For me that is the job I have at hand and the ambition that I have that Abbey National is regarded as a leading financial institution."

But with still very few Asian women - and women in general - holding top positions in British industry, Jetha's recognition raises questions. Whilst she is emphatic that neither a racial nor a gender glass ceiling has hampered her personally, she is concerned that the numbers don't add up. She says: "Inevitably, it [discrimination] must exist or otherwise there would be more women and more people from minority groups progressing." This may be only half the argument though, as she is quick to point out: "Women in general, not only Asian women, need to see some examples that show it is possible to progress, and I wonder sometimes if people feel that for whatever reason they can't break through. If you feel like that, then it is harder."

There is no doubt however, that Jetha is just such an example. And with the popularity of Asian culture at its highest peak in Britain currently - Bollywood films are enjoying multi-cultural success in the UK, Bombay Dreams a hit musical in the West End and Chicken Tikka Masala the national dish - according to Jetha, racial barriers have never been lower.

# Bill Gibbons, Director of Technology Services and Support

## ... on India Outsourcing

**Abbey is to hire hundreds of contractors from India to help it plug skills gaps in its IT department and provide support for new IT projects.**

Although the initial number of Indian staff employed is likely to be in the low hundreds, Abbey has the option of increasing this to cope with spikes in demand for IT development work. Indian staff will be employed both offshore and in the UK.

"In the past two years we have had Indian companies supplying contract staff for development and in addition we are looking at supplementary Indian IT contractors to support business growth," said Bill Gibbons, director of technology services and support at the bank. "The core are plugging skills gaps in one or two development layers and Gibbons said Abbey's increased reliance on Indian contractors is a threat to the jobs of UK IT staff, and added that his company has a full order book".

Abbey has placed increasing amounts of work with IT suppliers. In 2002, the bank signed an outsourcing contract with BT under which staff at its software development center in Bangalore will help the bank deliver large-scale IT projects.

## ... on moving legacy branch network onto IP virtual private network

**Abbey National has taken just five months to move its legacy branch network onto an IP virtual private network operated by BT Transform.**

The project, which involved 7,000 site visits, saw the replacement of leased lines, ISDN and ASDL with an IP VPN to support data and voice network traffic. When the first phase of Abbey's new network is fully operational at the end of October, its 750 branches will handle 750,000 internal calls and 1.2 million calls from the public every month.

Bill Gibbons, director of technology services and support at Abbey National, said three main factors contributed to the success of the project. (Cont.)

## .... on Benchmarking

**IT on trial: is your firm up to the standard?**

**An IT chief's benchmarking experience**

Bill Gibbons, director of technology services and support, Abbey: "When Abbey moved to BT in 2000-2001 we undertook a wide benchmarking exercise with a benchmarking supplier.

"We benchmarked our costs against BT, BT frames, mid-range, desktop, helpdesk, and we compared our costs with those of other suppliers. Sometimes we found ourselves above our benchmark and sometimes below. The exercise showed us we had areas to reduce our costs, and where to focus our efforts.

"We then did further benchmarking exercises on telecommunications and the desktop, where we got our biggest wins. We were the first UK company to deliver corporate-wide voice over IP over a virtual private network to 750 branches and installed 9,500 IP phones in five months.

"We collapsed more than 100 contracts into one outsourcing deal with BT. The benchmarking also showed that our desktop costs were too high, so we moved to a standard set of desktops, consolidated our contracts and went with Computacentre as our sole supplier.

"We saved ourselves £16m over five years. Against these kinds of savings, the cost of the benchmark itself (more than £100,000) was immaterial."

If IT chiefs want to discover if their company is deploying IT efficiently, benchmarking may reveal where it is under-performing and where savings can be made.

Benchmarking - comparing an organization's IT, staff or supplier performance usually against similar organizations - has become a standard way for firms to get an objective verdict on the efficiency of their IT, and is especially useful for IT directors justifying a shrinking budget.

Although internal benchmarks carried out by a firm can show whether costs are rising or falling, only by comparing the findings with those of other companies can an IT director assess whether costs are above or below industry performance levels. (Cont.)

# Bill Gibbons, Director of Technology Services and Support

## *(Cont.) ...on moving legacy branch network onto IP virtual private network*

First, the bank and BT Transform set up a proof-of-concept project that looked at the challenges of upgrading both the branches and the main offices.

"We learned a number of lessons from the project," said Gibbons. Upgrading branches involved multiple site visits by BT and Abbey staff working outside office hours.

A degree of advanced planning was also needed to liaise with local authorities to get permission to dig up roads to lay cabling.

The main branches posed a different challenge. "We realised we had to upgrade hundreds of people overnight to the new network. Any delay would have meant a key bank location would not be able to conduct business."

The pilot project also convinced Gibbons to involve branch staff to guide them through teething problems on the new network.

Gibbons put the second factor in the project down to a decision to locate Abbey's project team next to the BT Transact office in Milton Keynes.

"This allowed Abbey's project team of technical, human resources, legal and operational risk staff to collaborate more closely with BT on the project plan," he said.

The third key was "Setting reasonable planning horizons," Gibbons said. This involved ensuring the project team could accommodate business requirements.

One such factor was the upgrade from Category 3 cables to Category 5 within Abbey branches. "BT sub-contractors had to complete the cabling before we could transfer to the BT Transform network," Gibbons said.

## *(Cont.) ...on benchmarking*

Benchmarking has also been touted as a way for companies to reduce IT costs, which is currently relevant to corporate IT users. Some suppliers of benchmarking services have said their recommendations can cut IT costs by up to 15%. However, independent research to back this up is hard to come by.

But benchmarking services cost more than £100,000 and are time-consuming. Leask says, "It is hardly a cheap fix. Experts have warned of the risks involved in benchmarking and of the difficulty of comparing different aspects of IT other than cost."

Some of the IT analyst firms and specialist suppliers offer benchmarking services based on customer data collected by suppliers. Although benchmarking suppliers will usually name the customers in a reference group, they will not reveal which companies are using which IT systems.

A company using a benchmarking service will have to give information about its IT systems to allow a comparison to be made with other companies. The benchmarking supplier will then write a report highlighting where the user is performing better than the reference group and where there is room for improvement.

Ian Leask, executive consultant at benchmarking specialist Compass Management Consultants, said its benchmarking exercises usually take eight to 13 weeks and cost between £35,000 and £135,000. A firm will also have internal expenses, such as appointing a project manager to oversee the benchmarking and collect the necessary information. But despite the up-front expenditure, benchmarking services can help firms cut IT costs, said Leask.

"We would expect to realise savings of 15% of the IT budget and this can be as high as 25% a year," said Leask. "One way this saving could be achieved is if companies consolidated different software versions." Experts differ in their opinion on the type of benchmarking service most likely to achieve savings. Some advise using only a benchmarking service where a firm's IT is compared to an organisation with similar technology in the same industry.

(Cont.)

**(Cont.) *Bill Gibbons.... on Benchmarking***

"Comparing IT functions overall is of little use because of the inherent differences among departments and different business objectives," said benchmarking consultant Mike Salt, chief executive of Technology Performance.

According to Salt, the only valid comparisons are between companies who operate in the same sector and have similar profiles. However, Leask said there could be value in comparing against a reference group of companies in different industries who have already been audited by the benchmarking supplier.

"One of the problems is, if you were in manufacturing, what was the point in comparing against a financial services company?" he said. "But if the benchmarking service has 100 hardware suppliers, and you have 33, the value of the comparison is much less." "It doesn't stack up."

**Value value**

More paying for a benchmarking service, an organisation should have a clear idea of how satisfied end-users are with the IT service under scrutiny.

Without a before and after survey of end-users, IT directors cannot know whether their department's post-benchmarking improvements have been noticed or appreciated by the business. "Benchmarking could give you a comfort factor in giving the impression you are doing as well as your peers, but this does not mean you are performing well for your business needs," said Neil Maciter, research director at Ovum. Experts have also advised that benchmarking services should be used to judge systems and staff on a range of criteria - not just cost.

"Cost metrics will show whether you can run your IT more cheaply than other people, but value metrics [whether IT is delivering business value by increased revenue or customer satisfaction] is far more useful," said Chris Young of the Impact Programme, a networking organisation for IT directors.

Benchmarking is one way for IT directors to show the board how part or all of their department measures up against rival firms, as well as highlighting areas for improvement.

With IT under relentless pressure to justify its spending, being able to demonstrate that costs stand up to comparison with rivals can also be a useful bargaining tool when pushing for a pay-rise or a budget increase.

But benchmarking can also prove to be expensive and time-consuming. Comparisons with other companies might be useful but are no substitute for long-term planning and innovation.

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# Abbey National on Innovation in Document Management

The international growth of Abbey National's business meant it was time to examine its business processes, in particular its document management functions. With over 15 million customers in the UK and overseas, the expansion of Abbey's business inevitably led to growth in support services, which were developing independently with some central control. This resulted in a complicated management structure with mail units dealing with different service sectors and each working to their own standards, explains Brian Douglas, operations manager for Abbey's third-party outsourcing relationships.

Abbey needed to standardize its mailing and document distribution services, while amalgamating multiple, specialist departmental mailrooms into central hubs in each of its locations.

The bank decided outsourcing the whole process to one provider was the best solution. "We recognized document management services were not part of Abbey's core business," says Douglas. "After searching for a True Partner

Abbey National wanted a service provider who could offer an innovative approach and view the contract as a close partnership. It was also important to have a close cultural fit, explains Douglas. "Looking further ahead, we realized a simple contractor/client relationship was not enough. A partnership was essential to develop the right initiatives and innovations. We needed a provider who would jointly share the successes of delivering efficiency and value for money."

Finding the right partner required careful assessment. The bank selected [Pitney Bowes Management Services \(PBMS\)](#), a London, UK headquartered supplier of document management life cycle services to 1,300 customers across Europe and North America. The parties, which signed a contract in 1998, also had a supportive Transfer of Undertaking for Protection of Employees (TUPE) practice.

TUPE is part of Britain's Employment Relations Act of 1999, which protects employees involved in outsourcing relationships. Adele Padfield, national contract manager at PBMS explains that when an employee transfers to a provider's payroll, the outsourcer may have different rules regarding benefits, pensions, etc.

TUPE guarantees these employees their original benefits and allows the previous employer to retain the knowledge and experience gained by that employee during years of service.

[PBMS](#) offered a range of integrated services covering the entire document management life cycle including document creation, production, archiving, and retrieval. Abbey was keen to explore other options with the aim of bringing further savings to its office services functions. "We welcomed the partnership because we knew it had the scope and depth not only to provide the service but take us forward in our development," says Douglas.

## Outsourcing Saves \$1.2 Million

Streamlining mail operations has been profitable for Abbey. Douglas says the introduction of new technologies have brought Abbey tangible savings of £750,000 (\$1.2 million) through the reduction of full-time staff required to implement these functions and the release of valuable office space through mailroom centralization.

To streamline the process, PBMS first addressed Abbey's departments, which were opening and sorting their own mail, and absorbed this function into the mailroom. For the provision of documents in electronic format, PBMS designed solutions to scan incoming mail directly into Abbey's image and workflow systems.

[PBMS](#) currently handles 9.6 million items of incoming mail and 10.4 million items of outgoing mail for Abbey each year. The firm also now manages 171 staff members who support 21 office locations and a network of 750 Abbey National branches.

## Delicately Handling the Employee Transfer (TUPE)

Legal regulations required the provider to add Abbey's staff to its payroll. The service provider guaranteed a smooth transfer of employment.

Abbey was impressed with PBMS' level of commitment to staff training as both parties realized they needed the full commitment of the staff involved if they were going to achieve their goals. "PBMS made sure on-going training programs kept the staff motivated and equipped them

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## ***Abbey National on Innovation in Document Management***

with the necessary skills across multiple disciplines so they could successfully deploy their new solutions," says Douglas.

New TUPE candidates visited existing PBMS sites to discuss their experiences with others in an honest, open format without management presence. "PBMS managed to retain key staff members and keep teams motivated after the transfer," he says.

This was a worry, Douglas notes, because during the assessment phase uncertainty can lead to key staff leaving the original company rather than waiting to find out if they still have a job with the new company.

"PBMS have always been conscious of staff concerns and successfully avoided losing key staff. It remains critical that during the transition PBMS, service level continuity is unaffected. PBMS's success helped maintain morale and ensure that smooth continuity of service level during the transition," he says.

John Willmott, a senior analyst at Nelson Auckland & Co., a UK-based BPO research firm, says there is an increasing demand for document management outsourcing. "It is a growing market and an increasingly important element in many of the 'white collar' BPO services that are growing strongly. It is typically an embedded service tied in with industry-specific process handling, rather than a service in its own right," he explains.

Abbey is keen to build on its existing relationship with PBMS, which Douglas says has fulfilled Abbey's criteria for providing an innovative approach. The best vote of confidence is to give the service provider more business. Abbey National is doing just that. The bank is expanding its mailing and document distribution to include records management, fax fleet management, central reprographics, reception, and stationery services.

## ***Abbey National Network Infrastructure***

***The bank upgraded 750 branches to the new network in five months. New IP VPN handles 1.2 million calls a month***

Abbey National took five months to move its legacy branch network onto an IP virtual private network operated by BT Transform. The project, which involved multiple site visits, saw the replacement of leased lines, IP VPNs and other services with an IP VPN to support data and voice network services.

Since Abbey's new network is fully operational, its 750 branches handle 750,000 internal calls and 1.2 million calls from the public each month. Bill Gibbons, director of technology services and infrastructure at Abbey National, said three main factors contributed to the success of the project.

First, the bank and BT Transform set up a proof-of-concept project that looked at the challenges of upgrading both the branches and the main offices. "We learned a number of lessons from the project," said Gibbons. Upgrading branches involved multiple site visits by BT and Abbey staff working outside office hours. A degree of advanced planning was also needed to liaise with local authorities to get permission to dig up roads to lay cabling.

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