Email handling: How to do it right!

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Every day, GoGet Carshare get hundreds of emails - and they've been relying on a great open source engine weÂ customizedÂ (many years ago) to handle them,
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Having been one of the co-founders of GoGet Carshare, I knew there were some key functions which we had to get right - what we call our 'street front'. While we don't have a physical shopfront (GoGet operates from an anonymous church/office in Glebe) we could make pretty and attractive, we do have both an online (web and email) and a 'telephone' presence. Today I'll let you know a little about how we handle your inbound emails.

The holy grail of all enterprise business systems is 'integration' - you want one system which will do everything. People hate having the same records in multiple databases and using different applications for different tasks. However, this kind of enterprise grade integration can be very expensive - its how SAP, IBM and Microsoft make all their moolah - but it doesn't need to be.

In addition, sometimes with an 'integrated' system what you end up with is the worst of both worlds - software that does everything, and nothing. Specialised systems are sometimes really good at doing specific tasks, so the challenge is often how to get the best systems - and make them talk to each other.

Fleetcutter adopted a strategy very early on of making small, simple changes that 'glue' other systems together. In technical speak, its called middleware. We've done that with our email handling system and it means that GoGets email 'shopfront' is tightly integrated into its member, fleet and incident database.

"I can see a member correspondence, their account and their future bookings with just a couple of clicks" said Tully B, member services team member at GoGet. "It's a simple system that shows me what they're up to, and helps me solve problems quickly".

Fleetcutter continues to invest heavily in operations research that benefits their clients - this integration of an open source issue management engine meant no up front costs plus a specialised day to day tool which really improved service to their many members.

"Anyone who is still using Outlook to manage your members emails - please raise your hand in shame." said Nic Lowe of Fleetcutter. "It's not really scaleable, you've got little control, and - if you've got 5 team members handling emails - it just cant cope."