

“We can make things very easy”

Mercury Software is in a unique position when it comes to SEPA, having seen both sides of the fence. The company has worked with AIB to become SEPA-compliant and they are now in turn helping other businesses to be ready for the changeover

Established in 1997, Mercury Software is a market leader in the development of business management software applications. As the era of the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) begins, many businesses will be particularly interested in the software they provide for the creation of EMT and XML files for direct debit and credit payments.

The product in question – known as AutoPay – allows organisations to process direct debit payments in conjunction with their bank and is currently used by over 100 Irish organisations. In the last year, Mercury has had to ensure that a new SEPA-compliant AutoPay would be fully operational before SEPA's February 1st, 2014 deadline.

Mercury's own migration to SEPA was a “flawless process” which was aided greatly by AIB, they say. “We started to work on this project towards the end of 2012,” recalls Mark Nolan, director with Mercury Software, “and that work accelerated early in 2013.”

SUPPORT

“From the outset we have received extensive cooperation and support from the SEPA migration team at AIB. They put in the effort to meet us at a very early stage to provide us with information. They made us aware of what was required of our software.”

Because many AIB customers rely on Mercury's software it was crucial that the migration was completed without a hitch.

“They needed to ensure that we were going to be able to produce a product that would meet all the criteria. I have to say, the support that we have received from AIB has been absolutely fantastic,” says Nolan.

“It has allowed us to complete our redevelopment project earlier this year, and we had a SEPA-compliant software product completed before this summer. We then set about rolling this out to our customer base.”

Nolan notes that, like any business, Mercury had to become SEPA prepared if they wanted to continue to be paid electronically past February 2014.

“We allow our customers to pay their software licence fees by monthly direct debit. It helps us to offer flexible payment terms. It's a key feature of our business model. We process direct debits with AIB and we have done for many years so as a customer we had to change over to SEPA.”

FOCUS

Mercury's focus has now shifted from their SEPA compliance to aiding companies to be ready before the deadline. Nolan says that the migration can be a relatively pain-free experience – provided you proceed with it now.

“Because we now have software ready, tested and approved, we can help our customers migrate very easily. We can roll out a SEPA-compliant direct debit system in 24 hours to any company that contacts us. We can make things very easy.”

But that is not to say that customers aren't coming to Mercury with various queries. Nolan is very eager to put some particular questions to bed.

“One key concern is that companies assume that they will have to contact customers to obtain BIC (bank identifier code) and IBAN



(international bank account number). But we explain to them that there is no need to do that. Our software will automatically convert a sort code and bank account number into an IBAN and BIC. Once they hear that, it seems to take a lot of the burden away from them.”

Adds Nolan, “We make it very easy for them to become SEPA-compliant. Depending on the number of customers that they have, we can also convert their existing data into our software in one go – and that makes it very easy for them.”

PROJECT

Today, many companies in Ireland continue to place SEPA on the long finger according to Nolan, with many seeing it as a large-scale big project that will take time and effort. As Nolan points out, it doesn't have to be this way, but it is crucial they make a start as soon as possible.

“If they come to ourselves, and talk to the AIB SEPA migration team, we will make it very easy. But the key is to start to do it now. We will also give them whatever



Mark Nolan, director with Mercury Software

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support they need in the changeover process, plus in the future we will give them the support to ensure that it stays easy.”

“For any Irish SME, the collection of payment by direct debit is usually crucial to their cash flow. No Irish SME wants to see any disruption in their payment process. We can change them over to a SEPA-compliant system very quickly and easily. The best time to do that is now – if they leave it longer they are taking a risk with their payment process.”