White Paper:

Putting a Human Face on Vulnerability

The forthcoming Collections & Vulnerability Conference and webinar from the Vulnerability Registration Service (VRS), (hosted respectively by Shard Media and the Money Advice Liaison Group (MALG)), are two of many events that seek to address the cause and effect of vulnerability. They will talk about the identification and treatment of those experiencing vulnerability, but it's easy to lose sight of what vulnerability really means. Why are we putting so much effort into those practices and why do we need state-of-the-art systems to ensure that we achieve those goals?

Being vulnerable is to be in need of special care and protection for any number of reasons. Those reasons have been identified by the VRS and are currently being used to help verify predictive data models. But what does it actually feel like to be in that situation and how should we react to that person?

You should of course already know what it feels like to be vulnerable if you have experienced any life event, that has for a period of time, occupied all of your thoughts. That might be bereavement, or relationship breakdown (which can feel like a bereavement), injury, loss of employment, or long term mental or physical health problems. Whatever the cause, for some it can be overwhelming and will cause a shift in their priorities. It will also, in some cases, make people less willing to communicate those difficulties, and therefore, if we are aware there may be a problem, we will be able to act accordingly. Let's be clear, these are real-life issues and real reasons for a change in behaviours - not excuses why people are avoiding contact or payment. Of course, there will be some who seek to take advantage of any system, but I firmly believe that we must approach vulnerability on the side of the consumer unless proven otherwise.

Identification of vulnerability continues to improve through data modelling, which as mentioned, is increasingly being verified by the consumer registering the cause of their current difficulties through the VRS, either directly or through a 3rd party with the consumer's consent. Once identified, we need to be able to provide the right response at the right time in whatever form of contact proves most acceptable to the individual. Collection systems are designed to contact consumers in default and make arrangements for repayments. The less up-to-date, legacy-based systems are not however capable of taking data from multiple sources and providing the level of segmentation required to provide the level of response needed to achieve the best outcomes. One would hope that collections professionals reading this piece will seek those outcomes because it's the right thing to do, but it would be naive to ignore that they have a corporate and regulatory responsibility as well. The good news is that doing the right thing will produce the best outcomes for the business and the consumer, in terms of contact and repayment, or early identification of long-term problems that would otherwise cause resource issues.

To deliver those outcomes, it is essential to have systems that can be easily developed, changed, monitored, and compliant to enable the collections professional to treat customers who declare themselves vulnerable in an appropriate and compassionate way. It is also necessary to enable real-time updates from host systems or if a client's host system cannot support that service, provide the ability for business analysts to quickly and easily map and test inbound and outbound files without IT support.

That level of flexibility only exists in the new generation of omnichannel collections systems that combine native digital engagement capabilities with advanced automation, compliance tools, and efficient delivery.

Key features will include:

- **Embedded Digital Channel Messaging** – Seamlessly integrate SMS and email capabilities for more efficient and compliant desktop and automated workflow message execution.
- **Self-Serve Collection Payment Portal** – Provides a more compelling portal experience through features that increase consumer empowerment and convenience.
- **Cloud-Based Delivery** – Built specifically for the cloud to take advantage of the associated lower costs, higher performance, added security, and no client IT resources.
- **Anywhere Access** – Provides collectors with quick and easy access to their collections system to perform from anywhere they have internet access and a browser.
- **1-to-1 Collection Strategies** – Easily design and apply with repayment options that better align with each debtor's situation and communication preference.
- **DIY Collection System Administration** – Enables easy "Do-It-Yourself" with system-wide configuration, additions, and changes without IT or vendor assistance.
- **Real-Time Processing** – All data, events, and actions are updated immediately.
- **Advanced Automation** – Increase capabilities that alleviate manual processes, back-office activities and minimise collector desktop keystrokes from many to only a few.
- **Enhanced Compliance Management Tools** – More management controls and easier audit ability over workflows, strategies, and agents (data accessed/updated, information captured/displayed, actions required and taken, and any communication performed such as letters, voice, text, email, desktop scripts, and messages).

- **Agent/Team Real-Time KPI Dashboard** – Continuously updated desktop displays and performance targets (views set based on a specific role in the organization).
- **Omnichannel Collection & Communication Orchestration** – Centralized set-up and management of ALL customer collection strategies, customer contacts, and communication channels for more cohesive, effective, and compliant collections.

Treating customers who are experiencing vulnerable circumstances fairly, with compassion and understanding, will become the cornerstone of all consumer touchpoints for the foreseeable future.

A modern, flexible, collection system with embedded digital communications, omnichannel management, and an integrated self-serve portal is the technology that should be your next investment.

Some of you may be reading this on the day of the CCTA Conference and can find Nigel Young, Telrock's Director of Sales and Marketing (EMEA) there. Both Nigel and I will be at the C & V Conference in Manchester in October, so why not drop by our stand for an informal conversation.

About the Author

Following an executive management board role with an operating subsidiary of Lloyds Banking Group, Bruce Turnbull has spent the past 20 years providing collections management consultancy services to several blue-chip lending companies including Courts International, GE Capital, and Provident Group.

More recently Bruce has served as Managing Director of two UK operating subsidiaries of CoreLogic, Inc. (NYSE: CLGX), a $3 billion-dollar global data, analytics, and related services company. Bruce is currently a Director of the Vulnerability Registration Service and provides business consultancy to Telrock Systems.

About Telrock

This article has been brought to you by **Telrock**, a global technology provider of modern cloud-based collections software built new from the ground up for creditors and 3rd party consumer collections organizations. Telrock leverages open-sourced technology, powerful cloud computing, and more intelligent designs to provide the broadest and richest set of Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) capabilities. We deliver and support our solutions in North America from our Atlanta, USA office and in Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) from our London, UK office.

Telrock's key solution serving the collections market is **Optimus**, a modern cloud-based collections software platform that offers advanced capabilities, enhanced compliance, higher performance, and is delivered as a SaaS solution.

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