

IBM Cognos solution helps European Telecommunications Company stay connected with customers

Overview

■ Challenge

Aggregate data from different call center systems and give real-time, consolidated views of customer service and call data to provide more effective and proactive customer service

■ Why IBM?

This company chose the IBM® Cognos® Now! solution to attain continuous access to operational data from multiple legacy CRM and voice systems for more immediate insight into its customer-care performance throughout its entire call-center organization

■ Solution

The IBM Cognos 8 BI system and IBM Cognos Now! enable a streamlined approach for them to gain real-time access to consolidated, actionable data from disparate systems

■ Key Benefits

Real-time line of sight for customer-care center operations; continuous access to key operational KPIs; reduced time to action to drive agent utilization; the ability to write reports with minimal to no IT input; tight integration with existing systems



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This company, has operations in Northern Europe. They provide a full range of telecom services through various brands.

With 2008 revenue of nearly \$2 billion USD and close to 3,000 employees, this company is among the 500 largest publicly listed companies in Europe, and boasts more than two million corporate, government and consumers as customers. The company's offerings include fixed and mobile voice, broadband Internet and cable television services, as well as IT consulting, integration services

and the resale of mobile phones, computers and peripherals.

Challenges Faced

This company needed to aggregate current data from different customer relationship management (CRM) systems, and be able not only to understand but to interpret the data on the fly, to take advantage of opportunities in ever-changing conditions within its busy call centers.

In spring 2007, the company noticed a significant increase in inbound customer calls and emails, and thus an increase in queuing (waiting) and

response times that coincided with the onset of certain billing changes. In a highly competitive market, where customer service is a key to retaining and growing business, executives needed to move quickly so they could serve the company's huge and diverse customer base better. In the same vein, they wanted to gain more insight into all data associated with these incoming calls and emails, so it could assess and improve on its overall performance in customer service.

Because the company had multiple existing CRM systems in place through several earlier acquisitions, the new solution needed to be seamlessly integrated with several different platforms, and be able to provide more visibility into data consolidated from disparate systems. The customer-care centers had two computer telephony integration (CTI) systems in place with two different email systems, creating an issue: there was no 360-degree view of the customer. The customer-care center agents and managers could not obtain a total understanding of the customer while they were on the phone with them. With the different CTI and email systems in play came slight variations in the measurements, and the customer-care center managers could not compare data precisely.

The company had acquired many different customer-care systems as part of its growth strategy and needed to consolidate them to understand better how the customer-care systems are performing overall in the organization.

"We wanted a solution to engage in predictive analytics for workforce optimization purposes, and also so we could improve our overall forecasting abilities. In short, we wanted to improve services provided to our customers, and by using IBM Cognos 8 BI and IBM Cognos Now!, we would be able to use customer data more effectively," says the Head of Department, Customer Care, Consumer and Small Enterprise Customers.

Strategy Followed

Realizing it needed more effective real-time monitoring capabilities, coupled with a superior BI solution that would be integrated seamlessly with CRM systems already in place, they implemented IBM Cognos Now! in November 2008. In February 2009, the solution was fully functional in all the company's five call centers. Based on the strong success that it has seen in using IBM Cognos software for all of its historical reporting needs, they knew it could turn to IBM Cognos for its call-center data needs. The IBM Cognos

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*Head of Department,
Customer Care, Consumer and
Small Enterprise Customers, Large
European Telecommunications Company*

Now! implementation would replace its customized online service-level monitoring system, which collects data from the company's VoIP system.

IBM Cognos Now! was deployed at the company's five customer-care centers that support the consumer business of plus one million subscribers. The customer-care centers, in which several hundred employees work, have in excess of three million inbound contacts annually – three million calls and another one million emails. At any given time, call-center employees can be asked questions about any one of 12 million bills that the company sends out annually. At present, there are 70 active users of the IBM Cognos Now! solution, including several senior call-center managers.

The head of the customer-care sites now has a dashboard that can be viewed on the road or at home, at any time. Senior managers always want to see what's going on, and receive alerting emails on certain key performance indicators (KPIs) viewed through IBM Cognos Now! regularly, which prompts them to check in with site managers constantly. This high level of insight was not available before. With the introduction of IBM Cognos Now!, The company now has a real-time reporting system with the critical performance KPIs – independent of the systems beneath it.

"We like IBM Cognos Now! for its flexibility, especially because the customer-care center's KPIs can shift over the year, so we need the ability to add updates with new KPIs," the Department Head says. "For example, during the Christmas season, there may be a KPI tracking a holiday campaign, and management knows the queue times will elongate in response to the marketing campaign. So we'd need to adjust the target values based on that."

Benefits Realized

From the outset, this company's call-center specialists and executives fully understood the business benefits of an effective monitoring solution. And in short order, once IBM Cognos Now! was in place, several operational KPIs such as customer-waiting times and call-handling times were improved upon significantly. On both fronts, IBM Cognos Now! has acted as a catalyst to significantly increase call-center effectiveness.

Prior to implementing IBM Cognos Now!, the customer-care center managers would only see queue times and average handling times one day later, so addressing problems within the same work day was not possible. The call volume would rise, but there was no immediate insight into how long the queue was building, nor was this crucial information available quickly enough. The volume – handling time and queue

time – is now measured on an hourly, daily and weekly basis. Queue time is a critical performance issue because it is the most significant contributor to customer satisfaction.

As is the case with all call centers, customer-care operations depend highly on agents, who answer emails and inbound calls and make sales calls. Site managers determine when and how to blend the agents to achieve optimal customer-care performance within the call center. Since the implementation of IBM Cognos Now!, waiting times have improved because of the instant insight that it provides. For example, executives have immediate access to data in each minute of the work day, and the customer-care center's site manager can react within five minutes to an above-average queue time. When the queue time exceeds acceptable limits, the site manager immediately shifts agents to answering phones. Every available agent must take a call if the queue becomes too long.

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IBM Cognos Now! pulls transactional data tables every 15 seconds, enabling the customer-care center site manager to immediately see the status of all agents within their center without any additional programming. The success has prompted the company to showcase its importance to employees as well: the company is in the process of deploying large flat-panel screens in each of the customer-care centers to track and magnify some of the site’s key metrics for all the agents to see live.

With its use of IBM Cognos Now! the company has been able to garner far more real-time insight into business operations, allowing rapid response to changing market conditions. Alerts can be used to make time-sensitive decisions, or to initiate actions such as generating workflows. IBM Cognos Now! delivers actionable BI, continuously monitoring time-sensitive KPIs and line-of-business operational metrics. The solution offers highly visual, interactive, and self-service dashboards, data integration, analysis and reports, all prepackaged in a hardware appliance.

About IBM Cognos BI and Performance Management

IBM Cognos business intelligence (BI) and performance management solutions deliver world-leading enterprise planning, consolidation and BI software, support and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. IBM Cognos solutions bring together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers an open, adaptive and complete performance solution. Over 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries around the world choose IBM Cognos solutions.

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