IBM

Whirlpool Corporation places top priority on customer satisfaction with a solution from IBM and Siebel Systems.

Overview

■ **Challenge**
To support a new model of customer service with a single, enterprisewide source of customer information

■ **Solution: Integrating Stage**
CRM solution that changes the way Whirlpool interfaces with its customers

■ **Key Business Benefits**
Improved customer satisfaction and loyalty; expanded customer service capabilities; increased user productivity; reduced IT operating costs

From the way it runs its business to the efforts it places in product development, Whirlpool Corporation embodies its core values of respect, integrity, diversity and teamwork.

What does it *really* mean to be customer-focused? How does that change your customer service processes and operations? And, what are the technology implications?

Whirlpool Corporation can tell you. The world's leading manufacturer and marketer of major home appliances, Whirlpool Corporation (*www.whirlpoolcorp.com*) is introducing some broad-sweeping changes in how it interfaces with customers. In its customer contact center, a new customer service model is emerging based on highly personalized service.

"How do we really get the customer focus that's important for our future, for developing customer loyalty and all the other good things that are going to sustain us as a leader in the marketplace?"

—Stan Buntin, Manager, Business Administration, Whirlpool Corporation

*e*business

e-business success — blending new technologies with established strengths

---

Key Components

Software

- Siebel Call Center
- Siebel Field Service
- Siebel eMail Response
- IBM DB2® Universal Database™

Servers

- IBM @server pSeries™

"We did a lot of research to determine who was best in class. When we looked at all the options, we concluded that the IBM and Siebel Systems solution would provide the best support for where we're trying to go strategically over the long term."

— Stan Buntin

But, without the right technology foundation, the full benefit of this vision would never have been achieved.

Whirlpool Corporation's approach? Support its vision with an IBM and Siebel Systems solution, featuring Siebel eBusiness Applications and DB2 Universal Database running on IBM @server pSeries.

"We expect the rich functionality of Siebel eBusiness Applications, running on IBM's robust technologies, will enable us to increase customer satisfaction and improve productivity, but that's not the real push behind what we're doing," explains Stan Buntin, Manager, Business Administration, for Whirlpool Corporation's customer contact center and the business project manager for the Siebel eBusiness implementation. "We're thinking strategically: Where does the company want to go? How do we really get the customer focus that's important for our future, for developing customer loyalty and all the other good things that are going to sustain us as a leader in the marketplace?"

Choosing an industry-leading solution

Whirlpool Corporation prides itself in making the world's best home appliances. The company manufactures in 13 countries and markets products in more than 170 countries. Its brands are household names, including Whirlpool, KitchenAid, Roper, Estate, Bauknecht, Ignis, Laden, Inglis, Brastemp and Consul. The company is also a principal supplier to Sears, Roebuck and Co. of many major home appliances marketed under the Kenmore brand name.

When it came time to choose a customer relationship management solution, this global leader naturally turned to the major industry players. "We did a lot of research to determine who was best in class," says Buntin. "When we looked at all the options, we concluded that the IBM and Siebel Systems solution would provide the best support for where we're trying to go strategically over the long term."

He adds that Siebel Systems is number one in the market and, just as importantly, Siebel *e*Business Applications provide the company with the depth and breadth of functionality needed to accomplish its goals. This is especially true with respect to bringing customer data together in an integrated way to support diverse customer service processes (including service contracts and customer queries) and multiple product divisions.

Laying a foundation for global integration
The IBM and Siebel Systems strategic alliance was also an important factor in Whirlpool Corporation's decision. IBM was already a strategic partner with the company; IBM's relationship with Siebel Systems therefore gave Whirlpool Corporation added confidence moving forward. "We know we're implementing technology that both companies have made a major commitment to support," Buntin says.

"Our long-term vision is to pull all our core functional areas together, worldwide, powered by Siebel *e*Business Applications on the IBM technology platform," he adds.

Previously, Whirlpool Corporation—like many companies—had silos of customer data, captured in bits and pieces from various customer interactions, sometimes across multiple product divisions. For example, one system handled service scheduling and routing, while a totally separate system was used to answer customer requests for product information, installation or troubleshooting. When a customer called, Whirlpool Corporation's service representatives didn't have access to the whole customer history. They would often have to toggle through several different systems to provide the right information.

With the IBM and Siebel Systems implementation, that's all changing. "When we're up on the Siebel solution, our customer service reps will have everything they need to know about the customer at their fingertips, on a single screen," says Buntin.

> *"We've put the functional structure in place that will enable us to respond to our customers with a completely customer-centric view. We can now support several channels in an integrated fashion through our IBM and Siebel Systems solution."*
>
> *—Stan Buntin*

Loyal customers are a true asset in Whirlpool Corporation's goal of having one of its products in every home, everywhere—which is why its IBM and Siebel customer service solution is so critical.
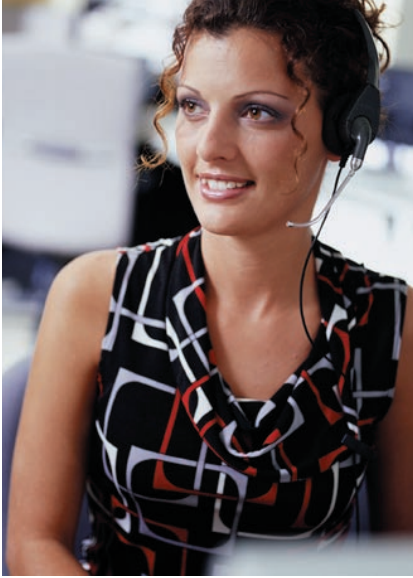
The IBM and Siebel Systems solution provides Whirlpool call center agents with realtime access to customer purchasing and service data, thereby enhancing the company's customer service and overall profitability.

"When they talk to the consumer, they'll be able to say, "I see you had Joe out yesterday servicing your refrigerator. How did that go? Is there anything else we can do to make sure things are working well?" Again, it will enable us to get to know our customers better and make them feel they are important to us."

Gaining a clearer understanding of the customer

Whirlpool Corporation is implementing its IBM and Siebel Systems solution in multiple phases. The company started with a small pilot in early 2001. To speed the implementation, the project team launched the solution on Oracle databases running on the pSeries, where it already had substantial technical skills and experience on hand.

By June 2001, the company had moved a small team of customer service reps onto Siebel Call Center, and Siebel Field Service and Siebel eMail Response to manage service contract activities. A second, slightly larger team started using the system to manage e-mail responses to customer queries and service requests. According to Buntin, the response has been very positive.

"Our users are excited; they really like the system," he says. "The biggest benefit right now—and it's small compared to what we expect later this year—is that we can now track much more closely the effectiveness of our e-mail responses and all our activities on the service contract side."

For example, Whirlpool Corporation now has precise information regarding the support customers want and the types of products in which they're interested. Customers, in turn, feel the company knows them better and can be more responsive to them.

"With our IBM and Siebel Systems solution, it's very easy to query and analyze our data to support our strategic planning," reports Buntin. "We can make process or even strategic changes if we see something's not working or if we identify some new opportunities we need to focus on."

Managing customer data more effectively

Following the successful pilot, the project team turned its hand to the wider contact center implementation. At that time, the company made a strategic decision to move from the Oracle platform to DB2 Universal Database. As the company's lead Database Administrator (DBA), Mark Clayton, explains: "We understood that Siebel Systems was moving its own operations onto DB2 and had made a commitment to develop future software releases on the DB2 platform. Since we wanted to align with IBM and Siebel Systems as our strategic partners, it was clear we needed to be on DB2 as well. In addition, we've been able to achieve some significant productivity gains on the maintenance side. For example, the backup and restore process is far simpler in the DB2 environment." In fact, Clayton and his fellow DBAs are saving a week's worth of time on this regular, repetitive task.

Working out a flawless implementation plan

The story behind Whirlpool Corporation's conversion from Oracle to DB2 is interesting in itself. In the contact center environment, with 24x7 operations, the window to execute was incredibly small. "We had to make that window as small as possible and execute flawlessly," says Clayton.

Working with IBM, Siebel Systems and the Whirlpool Corporation team together produced a tactical action plan. Then, they took it to the IBM Indianapolis testing facility and practiced the conversion in a parallel environment. Through this "dry run," the team was able to determine which steps could run in advance or simultaneously to save time. They also were able to identify potential interface issues.

"IBM provided outstanding support for our conversion process," says Clayton. "They pulled in resources far beyond what I expected and really helped us prove to our internal IT organization that we could step up to the plate and make this happen. With IBM's help, we brought the execution window down to 2.5 hours in our Indy trials. Better yet, when we actually executed in our production environment, we outperformed that baseline."

"As we move forward with…IBM and Siebel Systems, we'll be able to deliver truly personalized service."

–Stan Buntin

Moving to a new customer service model

With the data conversion completed by September 2001, the work to implement the IBM and Siebel Systems solution in Whirlpool Corporation's two contact centers began in earnest. Release 1, which began being launched in March 2002, supports all basic customer-facing activities for 300 users in Benton Harbor and another 400 in the Knoxville office. Just as important, it lays the technology foundation needed to turn the company's new customer service model into reality.

"We've put the functional structure in place that will enable us to respond to our customers with a completely customer-centric view," reports Buntin. "We can now support several channels in an integrated fashion through our IBM and Siebel Systems solution."

Later releases planned in 2003 will include capabilities such as text chatting and whiteboarding, increasing the range of service options for customers. "Our customers will be able to come to us through any of these channels and we will know them and be able to respond in a much more personalized way," says Buntin.

"We're also doing some things now with our IBM and Siebel Systems solution to better understand our customers' views of how our interaction went," he adds. "We can then build customer service processes based on that perspective, versus the old traditional measures of efficiency or how quickly we can process a customer's call."

"As we move forward with our new vision working with IBM and Siebel Systems, we'll be able to deliver truly personalized service," he concludes. "At that point, we'll be able to make consumers feel like Whirlpool Corporation really knows them and is strongly committed to their satisfaction."

For more information

Please contact your IBM sales representative or IBM Business Partner.

Visit us at:
ibm.com/e-business