

Infinity - Case Study

looksoftware™

Critical issue

- ▶ Required a more flexible workflow to improve productivity and eliminate the frustration customer care staff were experiencing

Solution

- ▶ Development of a new rich client call center application linking the System i Order Management application with the agents assigned to executing Customer Service functions

Results

- ▶ Integrated three disparate external applications into a new interface which enriches the agent's experience and reduces the need to leave the mainline process
- ▶ Reduced the process complexity and enhanced the application's acceptance

Who else can ship a package across the continental United States – for less than 50 cents?!

Background

A confronting question indeed for Infinity's competitors and a great achievement by a business on the up!

Infinity Resources, Inc. (IRI) is a recognized leader in direct marketing and direct commerce managed services. IRI's diversified client list includes many best-in-class, direct marketing companies including GE Money and Playboy to name a few.

In addition, IRI is itself a world-class direct marketer, with an industry-leading presence in several business verticals. Their success is not only evident in their own brands that collectively have experienced double-digit growth for the past several years. They also take pride in the success of their clients, who continue to maximize their profit potential and achieve their strategic goals.

At IRI, they claim to do it all! This includes distribution services, contact center support services, operations consulting services, creative design services, print marketing services and e-commerce services. Yep, they really do it all!

Headquartered in Itasca, Illinois – quite literally a few blocks from Chicago's O'Hare International Airport – and with locations at Huntington Beach and Rancho Cucamonga, California, IRI is a dynamic and fast-growing business. A mark of this dynamism is in its founder, CEO and Chairman Dennis E Abboud. Dennis has been named a finalist in the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year several years running. And to its credit, IRI has already developed a wonderful legacy of philanthropy with support to such organizations as Family Focus, Chicago Children's Hospital, The Benet Academy, Special Olympics, Make-A-Wish, St. Jude Hospital, The Children's Heart Foundation and

The American Red Cross among others. IRI's own brands include DeepDiscount.com, DVDPlanet.com, Critics' Choice Video, Collectors' Choice Music, Heartland Music, Serenade Music, The Video Collection, Spilsbury, Infinity Entertainment Group and i-Serve Direct Commerce Services.

Challenge

"Our RPG back-end application in our call center has been continually refined over the last few years to suit our needs – our call center in Ottawa, Illinois gives us a real competitive advantage. Although the functionality was great, we needed to streamline the workflow for particular types of customers", said Phil Trabaris, Enterprise Director of Systems Staff.

"The existing workflow had been in place since the original 5250 application was built. As our business has grown to serve more different groups of customers, each with their own unique needs, the system forced our staff to follow the same rigid workflow for these different groups of customers. We needed a more flexible workflow to improve productivity and eliminate the frustration our customer case staff were experiencing."

It was decided that the Customer Service application should allow the execution of a limited set of specific functions including verify customer information, place an order, check the status of an order, enter an order note, reship an order, process an exchange, facilitate a product return, apply a credit to an order and enter a customer note.



"We decided that we needed to change the screen flow and navigation to streamline the workflow. Important spin-off benefits would be to reduce operator frustration, improve productivity and significantly enhance the customer experience," said Phil.

Solution

Recognizing the need to get something done quickly, Phil approached looksoftware to ask for assistance. Kim Foo from looksoftware put together the project plan with Phil using looksoftware's "cloud based" consulting resources. There has been no face-to-face contact since the initial meeting Kim had with IRI. Design, construction, testing, signoff and live implementation has occurred using looksoftware's remote resources. The task - to develop the new rich client call center application linking the System i Order Management application with the agents assigned to executing Customer Service related functions - has been completed, quickly and painlessly!

The new screen workflow and process were optimized for each customer type without needing to change IRI's back-end business rules. looksoftware's products enabled screens to be skipped and merged and additional logic was added where needed.

"That their project and product skills matched their professionalism, was no surprise to me", said Phil. "What was different was the cloud model they used. We actually only met Kim, the Project Manager, once!

From then on, everything has been done over the web!"

Benefits

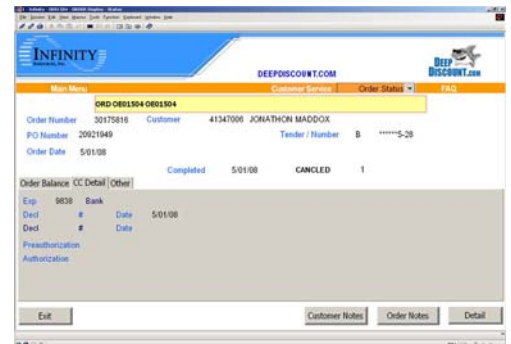
Having rebuilt a GUI interface into the Telephone Order Entry system, IRI was able to test the benefits of the upgraded application and saw a high payback potential.

Once that application had gained wide acceptance, IRI expanded the new interface to include the Customer Service and Mail Order Entry screens, to the point where in no time at all, the call center agents will no longer need to touch a green screen!

"We've integrated three disparate external applications into our new interface which enriches the agent's experience and reduces the need to leave the mainline process. These include:

- CTI (Computer Telephony Integration) which interfaces our telephone system to provide a screen pop of the customer's name and address
- A Microsoft Access database that stores all of the agent scripting and enhances the customer experience; and
- Web Application forms, which manage our return label application.

"As a result we have reduced the process complexity and enhanced the application's acceptance.



Our existing CRM application is very robust and these new integration points in the workflow, have resulted in more flexible ways to complete various tasks.

"Our goal from the outset was to increase optimal utilization. To do that, we needed to make the tasks uniform. The improved application with its streamlined workflow and new integration points has given us the tools to build standardization into the CRM application. Indeed a real benefit is that we have reduced variability and inconsistencies and customers are treated with the same excellent service each and every time," said Phil.

Jeff Ostapa, IRI's Director of Customer Service, is delighted with the outcomes so far.

"With the help of the new application, we have reduced our training times by 20%. Based on turnover rates in the call center industry, this can add up to a significant amount of savings," said Jeff.

Just another significant step towards living the company maxim -

'Because perfect fulfilment delivers limitless profits'!

