



REFERENCE

Realizing optimization potentials by implementing a highly automated and integrated customer self-service system

Besides the customer channels service center for telephone and written communication as well as the customer centers for personal advice, swb realized that a growing number of customers also see online communication** with the swb as a possibility to experience customer closeness.

Opportunities and Challenges

In recent years, customers have learned to carry out bank transactions, take out insurance and make general purchases online. As a result, people now have certain expectations as regards online communication. These are:

- **Uncomplicated and fast:** Complete online resolution of issues with no need for further correspondence
- **Secure, direct access to personal "customer account"**
- **Integrated with other departments:** Online users expect other departments in the company to be able to view past online transactions and provide assistance on that basis.

Consequently, from a technical perspective, it was necessary to integrate the online system with swb's process-operating systems (the Oceans 2006 CRM system and the SAP IS-U billing system).

In addition to providing a comprehensive service for customers, a highly automated customer channel provides the opportunity to free up capacity in existing service organizations dramatically, especially at peak times (billing, annual meter reading). This helps cut the cost of employing additional service staff and substantially increases the availability of service advisors for the customers.

Expertise from mgm technology partners

mgm technology partners came up with the concept for swb's online future in conjunction with swb's marketing department and nordIT, a service provider close to swb. "With its CRM and portal experience, mgm was able to show us a number of quickly realizable solutions," says Jens Riddel, project manager at swb, describing the cooperation with mgm. "After all, we wanted to be fully involved in the process and not simply hand the work over to an external service provider," adds Riddel.



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Jens Riddel

Project manager at swb

swb AG in Bremen and Bremerhaven is Germany's twelfth-biggest regional utility company, serving more than 380,000 customers. swb offers the full range of energy-supply services and continually investing in optimizing its customer and service organization in order to be as approachable as possible for the local population it serves in Bremen and Bremerhaven.

The result is a modern Java/J2EE solution which is incorporated in the swb website and integrated with the CRM infrastructure and the billing system. swb customers can now log in to the website and immediately access their up-to-date account information. From here, all of the relevant transactions for residential customers are handled, such as:

- Latest meter reading
- Moving house
- Bank / registration details
- Inquiries
- Services

Only if the quality assurance function shows up an apparent error does the customer center become involved (for instance if a user enters an implausible meter reading). The solution was gradually extended, with components added to enable business and building-management customers to use the online system.

Results achieved

The customer self-service (CSS) system has since developed into a new pillar of customer communications at swb. Although not explicitly advertised initially, user numbers rose continually. The initial period was used to better



Figure 1

adjust the ergonomics of the system to the needs of the customers, many of whom made suggestions for improvements directly through the CSS.

“In customer-facing areas, every company needs to be in a position to adapt its processes and systems quickly,” explains Norbert Dreier, nordIT project manager. “The flexibility of the solution enables our client swb to react quickly at any time and thus gives them the opportunity to distinguish themselves on the market.” These days, for example, up to 15% of the capacity in swb's service organization is freed up at peak times. This has a positive impact on the service level and allows customer advisors to concentrate on the more complex customer inquiries.

Customer Satisfaction

The collaboration enabled a solution to be produced that is accepted by swb's customers, while also supporting swb's business targets thanks to the increased efficiency it brings. The cooperation model allows swb's marketing team to realistically plan new concepts based on the enhanced knowledge the system provides and to bring new ideas to market very quickly, sometimes within a few days. “We look at the figures every month and are very pleased with how quickly our investment is paying off,” says Robert Benckert, marketing team leader at swb, who is delighted with the success of the project.

** More than 54% of Bremen residents were internet users in 2005, according to tns infratest's "(N)Onliners" study.

Could we catch your interest in our know-how?

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