MITEM Case Study · Cinergy

Cinergy Uses MITEM Software to Integrate Disparate Call Center Applications

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— JIM HOLSTEIN, CUSTOMER SERVICE MANGER, CINERGY

INTRODUCTION

In 1994 Cincinnati Gas and Electric and PSI Energy merged to form Cinergy Corporation. Today, Cinergy has a balanced, integrated portfolio consisting of two core businesses: regulated operations and commercial businesses. Cinergy's regulated public utilities in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky serve 1.5 million electric customers and 500,000 gas customers. Cinergy's competitive commercial businesses have 6,300 megawatts of generating capacity. The company's two call centers handle approximately 4.5 million customer contact calls a year.

The new company was faced with the challenge of integrating four separate customer contact groups that were using different systems. The four groups are:

1. The East Call Center that services customers from southwest Ohio, including the Cincinnati area and northern Kentucky.
2. The West Call Center that handles mostly residential issues calls in Indiana.
3. A contact center for new construction contacts.
4. A business service center that handles commercial and industrial contacts

In 1993, Cincinnati Gas & Electric had developed and deployed a single system to replace the different systems used by various customer contact groups. Still, this new system presented customer information to customer service reps on cumbersome-to-use mainframe green screens and contained over 500 screens of information. It was evident that this was not an efficient system, and the call center environment would need to be integrated via a new user interface application.

"We began looking for a solution that would make the system easier for our contact center reps to use," says Jim Holstein, Customer Service Manager for Cinergy. "We needed to integrate the screens most often accessed by our service center reps into a single composite application that they could use to answer customers' questions more efficiently."

The Customer Management System (CMS) applications that required integration were:
- CTI application (screen pop)
- call tracking application (tracks call types to determine volumes by call type; also used to communicate information to third-party customer satisfaction surveyor)
- forms application (communication tools to communicate special customer requests; not found in CMS)
- outage management system (communicates outage information to operations groups)
- credit scoring application (determines deposit requirements based on credit worthiness)
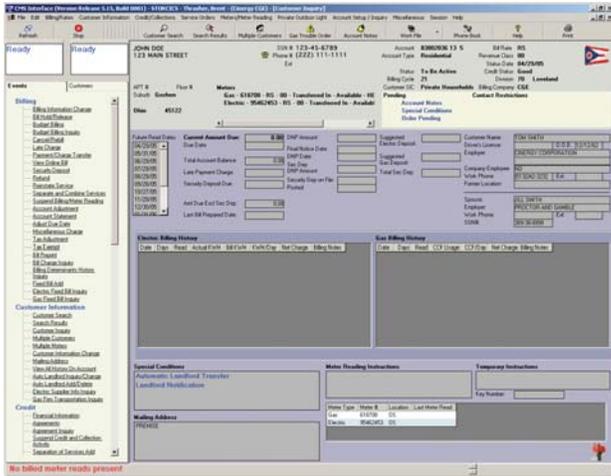
The Cinergy Super Screen

CINERGY "SUPER SCREEN" PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

"There were two things that we were really looking for: a desktop application that would run our customer contact reps' PCs and a web application interface that could be used by our customers to look up account information," says Holstein. "Additionally, it was important that we could leverage our internal core competence and skills in Visual Basic. MitemView was the only product that covered all those bases."

PROOF OF CONCEPT SEALS DEAL

"We decided we wanted to investigate MITEM further, so we brought them in for a proof of concept to show us how they could develop a desktop and a web self-service application," says Holstein. "They were able to hook up to our system and create a composite application that had many of the attributes of several different screens of information. They also created a web-based application. Both projects were accomplished in a very short period of time.

Cinergy selected MITEM to develop the new customer contact center applications and then began a collaborative process that involved MITEM professional services, Cinergy IT professionals, and contact center representatives. The project was divided into five phases that included development and implementation:

1. Development of highest call volume traffic transactions (approximately 70% of Call Volume)
2. Development of next highest call volume traffic transactions (approximately 20% of Call Volume)
3. Implement phases 1&2 during West Center conversion of new system

4. Development of majority of remaining transactions (approximately 10% of Call Volume) & implementation of phases 1&2 in East Center
5. Implementation of remaining transactions in the East & West Centers

THE CINERGY SUPER SCREEN

The Cinergy Super Screen application was developed with MITEM's stalwart legacy integration software and toolkit, MitemView. The new contact center application takes data from 11 green screens and puts it into one composite application built with Visual Basic.

The Super Screen enables customer contact reps to:
- view several aspects of a customer's account while viewing one screen
- establish customer consumption patterns in kilowatt hours for as many as 24 months
- view the customer's most recent payment information
- help customers better understand their bills

Currently, both of Cinergy's large contact centers are using the MitemView Super Screen application. These two contact centers employ 250 service reps. In addition, approximately 300 Cinergy personnel use the Super Screen application in their field customer service offices, in their Credit outsourced center, and in the billing services group.

CINERGY'S CALL CENTER IS NATION'S FIRST TO BE AWARDED J.D. POWER CERTIFICATE

Cinergy is the first energy company in the nation to be recognized as a J.D. Power and Associates Certified Call Center. In December, 2004, Cinergy was recognized as one of a select group of call centers across the nation for offering "An Outstanding Customer Service Experience."

"Unlike the J.D. Power survey that we participate in annually, the Call Center certification consists of an operational assessment to gauge sustainable excellence in call center service," explains Holstein. "The certification process began with a two-day on-site audit. The agenda included interviews of customer service representatives, supervisors, trainers, quality assurance, and management staff. The second part of the certification process surveyed customers directly after their interaction with a call center representative to rank their experience."

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