

WIDEX

VAI Implements E-Commerce Solution for Hearing Aid Provider

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

Providing quality customer service is a vital component to the success of any business, but it is especially crucial when dealing with healthcare products that affect one's quality of life.

Hearing aid manufacturers work in an industry where the ability to design a quality product, and deliver that product quickly, is of the utmost importance.

In today's market, an effective e-commerce Web application, coupled with traditional call center ordering, is important to compete successfully. Dispensers often utilize the Internet as their first resource when researching companies and products; therefore, an easy to use order placement application is essential. In addition, professional guidance is integral to developing a comprehensive, integrated, company specific solution.

As Widex decided to enhance its e-commerce capabilities to improve customer service and expedite orders, it knew that a robust e-business application integrated into its existing enterprise resource planning (ERP) software package was the key component to a successful launch.

Customer Profile

Widex U.S.A., founded in 1956, is one of the most respected names in the hearing healthcare industry. The innovative and remarkably small hearing aids provided by Widex have helped millions of hearing impaired adults and children.

Problem-Context

Widex needed a Web-based solution to deliver customized content and applications to its hearing aid dispensers. The company wanted to provide dispensers with self-service

capabilities, such as order placement, training registration and access to current product information. In addition, dispensers were phoning the call center or mailing in order forms to secure new products, with above average turn around times. Widex wanted to ease pressure on its call center, especially since a good portion of the incoming calls were customers tracking orders.

To help improve customer service and speed delivery times, Widex called on VAI (Vormittag Associates, Inc.) to develop a customized e-Commerce solution.

Objectives

For Widex, the primary incentive for implementing an e-Business solution was to deliver superior customer service and achieve optimal customer satisfaction. To meet the goals of call-center call reduction, improved order



accuracy and decreased order distribution times, it was important to install a practical and integrated Web-based solution that ran on the IBM Power Systems with the IBM i operating system and integrated with its existing ERP package.

Finding the Right Partner

Selecting VAI to implement a comprehensive e-commerce solution was an easy decision, since Widex was an existing VAI customer. Widex knew that VAI would listen to their needs and had the technical capabilities to ensure that the solution was tailored to meet those needs. "We were already running VAI's S2K ERP package, and we knew that we could rely on them to get the job done. We also wanted to ensure system continuity, so choosing VAI for our e-commerce solution was an easy decision. VAI designs their software specifically for the IBM i platform, and it was important for us to maximize that technology investment," said Joe LaMonte, Executive Director of Information Technology at Widex.

Solution- Process

VAI implemented its S2K Commerce Express package and the IBM WebSphere® Portal Software for Widex in April 2006. After reviewing the company's needs, VAI customized the solution, which gives dispensers

the ability to order/reorder hearing aids for patients using an electronic version of the ear impression. This has sped up the reorder delivery process significantly.

Since VAI was familiar with Widex's business, the implementation went smoothly, only requiring 5-months to implement. VAI worked closely with Widex to ensure that the solution addressed the company's primary goals. As such, VAI's software provides Widex with a unique portal solution to help improve employee productivity, cut costs and strengthen relationships with customers and trading partners.

VAI's Director of e-Business Development, Todd Endsley, commented, "Widex provided an interesting opportunity for VAI to expand a company's current ERP usage into a user friendly, customer oriented, yet powerful application. The addition of S2K Commerce Express and WebSphere allows Widex to service their online customers efficiently and effectively. We are pleased that Widex chose VAI to help them achieve their customer service goals."

Using the Solution to Solve the Problem

VAI's S2K Commerce Express

and IBM's WebSphere Portal solutions really fit the bill for Widex– it allowed them to leverage their investment in the IBM i and provided a cost effective, flexible framework for delivering variable content and applications to their dispensers.

Evaluation- Results and Benefits

Widex has empowered its dispensers with access to greater amounts of product information and educational support. Through VAI's e-business solution, Widex is a resource to its dispensers. The company's Web site now offers training seminars, a knowledge center, a pediatric center and a wealth of downloadable information that was previously sent via mail. Widex has always been a customer centric company and the new and improved Web site is the next step in enhancing its customer relationships.

Notably, Widex was able to greatly reduce the number of faulty and illegible order applications. Previously, between 10 and 20 percent of all orders had some human error or required a call back for information verification purposes. Now that the order process has been automated, it virtually eliminates this problem.

Perhaps the most important



thing that Widex 'delivers' to its customers is quality of life. For the hearing impaired, hearing aids provide an opportunity to communicate effectively with those around them and as such, Widex understands that prompt delivery is essential to its customers. If

a hearing aid is damaged or lost, it is vital that Widex provide a replacement quickly. VAI's e-Business solutions have helped the company keep this promise.

Customer Quote

Joe LaMonte recalled, "The

e-Business project addressed our service issues nicely. With automated options and enhanced customer accessibility, we are confident that our customer service capabilities will continue to exceed our client's expectations."

