



Milwaukee Electric Tool

Milwaukee Electric Tool "Electrifies" its Sales and Marketing Teams

Solution:

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Cindy Thoenes, Business Systems Manager

In the summer of 1999, Cindy Thoenes, Business Systems Manager, and Dennis Pfeil, Director of Information Services for Milwaukee Electric Tool (Milwaukee) embarked on a pivotal project that would change the way the company supported its customers. With increasing sales to its loyal customer base, the sales force was finding it extremely difficult managing all the details required to provide the high level of customer service the company prided itself on delivering. The ad hoc paper-based method that sales employed didn't support the company's changing business needs. Without an automated means of capturing and managing customer information, sales was concerned too many important details could be lost.

Milwaukee's field sales organization sells to large retailers like Home Depot and industrial supply houses like W.W. Grainger. To service smaller accounts, management planned to establish a telesales organization, the Lightning Direct Team (Lightning Direct). Because customers calling in would expect immediate responses to their questions, it was obvious the existing paper-based system would not be adequate to support the telesales reps. How could the Lightning Direct Team function effectively without an automated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution?

Urgent Need for Automated CRM for Telesales

"We were under pressure to implement an automated CRM solution", explained Mr. Pfeil. Milwaukee evaluated more than 10 CRM applications against its business requirements and unanimously selected eSales, a Notes-based module of eBusinessStreams from Relavis Corporation, a Lotus Business Partner. Having used Lotus Notes since 1997 as its communication and collaborative environment (e.g. e-mail, calendaring, scheduling), Milwaukee's employees were proficient using Notes. Selecting eSales meant the company could leverage its software investment and employee training in Notes.

"Using the Quick Start program, a rapid implementation service from Relavis, Lightning Direct was up and using eSales in only five days! We were very pleased. Because we decided to use eSales pretty much out-of-the-box, Relavis quickly configured the software to address our needs, saving time and money," Ms. Thoenes added.

Today Lightning Direct relies on eSales to document all conversations with customers. When a telesales rep calls a customer, the rep has immediate access to the customer's history with Milwaukee. After a quick scan of the caller's activity, the rep immediately focuses on the customer's needs. Reviewing the customer's profile provides the rep with information to upsell or cross sell items. For example, the customer may have recently purchased drills and Milwaukee may have a product special on drill bits. The rep can bring this to the caller's attention. Such proactive support has won praise from customers.

Lightning Direct reps were quick to use the system. Within the first months of operation, team members had identified a number of new ways to configure eSales, enhancing the company's sales along with promoting customer service. Because the software can be tailored by the end-user, reps can easily add functionality without having to involve the IS organization. For example, the Lightning Direct Team streamlined the literature fulfillment process. Now when a caller requests a brochure, the telesales rep creates a cover letter, selects the brochure from a master list, and hits the 'send' button. Using the e-mail functionality of Notes, the request is sent to a clerk who assembles the mailings. Milwaukee expects new processes like this to further distinguish its customer service in reducing turn-around time while generating cost savings for the company.

"What's especially interesting is that the process developed organically," Ms. Thoenes pointed out. "Relavis' eSales and Lotus Notes have tremendous flexibility. When telesales reps said 'what if', Milwaukee had the tools to turn their 'what if' into reality with minimum effort. Our employees have great suggestions regarding streamlining our processes, and we now have the tools to quickly execute many of their ideas."

Sales Experiences More Face Time with Customers

Given the success of Lightning Direct and its use of eSales, the entire 200-person North America sales organization will be using the CRM solution by the end of 2001. Sales had no IT-based applications; most sales reps used basic paper-pencil to capture and manage customer information. However, word spread about Lightning Direct's successes with eSales and the field sales group eagerly awaited the implementation of the Relavis solution. A three-day training period is planned to teach sales the Notes e-mail software along with the functionality of eSales.

Relavis' eSales provides the electronic solution for the sales organization to accumulate customer information and share it in a collaborative manner. Milwaukee's management forecasts the new system will not only improve information flow, but also will increase sales productivity by automating many administrative activities. This will give account managers more time to spend developing relationships with their customers.

Like most companies, Milwaukee has a vast amount of information stored in electronic and paper files throughout the corporation. However, there is no grand "Table of Contents". In fact, much information is undocumented --- it resides in employee's heads. Because sales has no easy way to locate information, it creates documents from scratch, not the best use of its time. And, like so many organizations today, sales also expends considerable time locating content experts for its questions.

To address these opportunities, Milwaukee plans to capitalize on eSales' knowledge management functionality. When rep's have a question but don't know the name of the subject matter expert, they will access 'Expert Q&A' in eSales and enter the question or request. For example, when a rep queries the database for the composition of saw blades for a new model product, the message automatically will be sent to the designated expert on saw blades who in turn will respond. Information turnaround will be much faster and more dependable.

Another time saving feature of eSales is 'Team Talks'; it lets Milwaukee's sales reps access discussion forums to obtain competitive and other useful sales information to accelerate the sales process.

The Sales Library, a repository for documents including price lists, marketing programs, presentations, proposals, etc. will support reps by helping them quickly locate company information whether they are on the road, at a customer's site, or in their office. Currently, information is located in binders, paper files, briefcases, etc. and is not readily accessible. It takes the company three to four weeks just to print and distribute new product information to its mobile sales force. By collecting and organizing all relevant materials in the Sales Library, Milwaukee expects savings in dollars (eliminating mailing and printing costs) and in time (reducing the hours reps spend filing and searching for information).

Milwaukee's market is very competitive. With eSales, the product-to-market cycle time will be compressed through electronic distribution and retrieval of information. The company views this as a potential competitive advantage in that its sales force will be presenting new products to customers nearly a month earlier than it could without the Relavis solution.

Marketing Welcomes New Customer Segmentation Functionality

With limited customer information spread across a number of existing computer systems, marketing was at a disadvantage in creating targeted mailings. Today it has only company information on its customers -- no individual names or titles. That will change when marketing gains access to eSales. With the new software, marketing will be able to segment Milwaukee's customer base by title, function, etc. to generate mailings by name versus generic groups. Any marketing professional knows the impact of using a name on a mailing. Also, marketing and sales will have the capability to implement e-mail and fax campaigns, a more timely and lower-cost means of communicating with customers.

Identifying customers for focus groups has been a challenge. Using its new CRM solution, marketing is gaining better insight into what its customers really want by tapping into specific customer types to help define new products.

In the future, Milwaukee plans to expand the functionality of its eBusinessStreams solution in the sales and marketing groups. Both Ms. Thoenes and Mr. Pfeil expect users to identify opportunities in which the company's automated CRM solution can take on more of the workload, freeing up employees to spend more direct time with customers. And, based on research findings that indicate time spent directly with customers translates into more sales, Milwaukee expects to see the results in its top and bottom lines.

About Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation

Established in 1924, Milwaukee sells its heavy duty, portable electric tools to professional tool users throughout the world. Acquired by Atlas Copco in 1995, the company has more than 2000 employees.

About Relavis

Headquartered in New York City, Relavis Corporation provides collaborative customer relationship management (CRM) solutions that increase customer revenue, profitability, and customer loyalty. Its software product, Relavis eBusinessStreams, leverages existing technology investments and provides CRM automation that allows an organization to interact more efficiently and effectively with its customers, prospects, partners and internal associates. Based on the IBM Application Framework for e-business, Relavis eBusinessStreams is scalable, runs on multiple platforms, and easily extends to the Web, making it a highly comprehensive, flexible, customizable and open platform. Relavis eBusinessStreams is available in multiple languages.

Relavis received the 2001 IBM Beacon award for "Greatest Business Impact", and the 2001 Lotus Beacon Award for "Best eBusiness CRM Solution." Some of its 500+ customers include ABB Automation, Barclays Bank, Dupont, Hartford Life, International Paper, Michelin, and SITA.