



- BACKUP/RECOVERY/ARCHIVING ■
- CLUSTERING ■
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- MESSAGING ■
- VIRTUALIZATION ■

CHALLENGE

Increase sales efficiency and create new customer service capabilities by integrating 40 different information systems used by sales and customer relations agents into a single, desktop application

SOLUTION

Build the Integrated Dell Desktop (IDD) using the Microsoft® .NET Web services development framework; IDD integrates multiple customer sales applications by accessing a services layer on Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers from Dell OptiPlex™ desktop computers

BENEFITS

IDD helps to improve the efficiency of customer service, decrease training time, reduce average call duration, and increase the sales close rate

Enhancing Sales Efficiency

Dell and Microsoft collaborate on the Integrated Dell Desktop to provide the sales force with a single, integrated desktop application

For Dell, nothing matters more than providing the best possible service to its customers. The Dell direct sales model set an industry standard for efficiency and customer satisfaction by connecting directly with Dell customers. According to this sales approach, Dell builds every system to order, which helps the company to introduce new products and technologies faster than competitors.

Under the Dell model, customers place orders primarily through Dell.com or Dell call centers that are staffed by sales agents. Dell agents help callers configure and order systems that meet customers' specific needs.

Dell wanted to enhance the customer experience while increasing the efficiency of its sales model by integrating online and phone-based channels. "In working to optimize our call centers, we focus on efficient call handling, the stability of our environment, and making sure that our sales representatives are well trained and helpful," says Michael Rosenstein, Dell director of global product management marketing, sales marketing services tools. "But instead of an integrated sales tool, what we had was an order management tool and several other stand-alone systems that were used by sales."

As a result, sales agents at call centers used as many as 40 different information systems to get a complete picture of customer needs. While some sales tools offered Web-based input, other important tasks, such as the generation of quotes and order placement, required agents to follow a complex and time-consuming process of entering codes in a variety of applications. Dell needed a way to simplify the sales agent experience so agents could accelerate the ordering process and deliver an even more efficient customer experience.

Dell and Microsoft build the Integrated Dell Desktop for better customer interaction

Drawing on the deep relationship between Dell and Microsoft, the Dell development team began working on a new solution with members of the Microsoft .NET Enterprise Architecture team. The Dell and Microsoft developers used Microsoft Visual Studio® .NET development environment and the Microsoft .NET Framework, which provided a common programming model and runtime for developing Web services, Web applications, and smart client applications.

Together, the team developed the Integrated Dell Desktop (IDD), a technological leap forward that provides Dell sales agents with a consolidated view of customer interactions to help significantly streamline the sales process. IDD relies on a smart client and a service layer, which provides the capabilities of the core Dell business systems as Web services. The smart client resides on Dell OptiPlex desktop computers running Microsoft Windows® XP Professional operating system. The service layer and many of the business systems that the client uses reside on Dell PowerEdge servers, running Microsoft Windows Server® 2003 operating system and Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000.

The use of a Web services environment made the installation of IDD relatively easy. "The IDD smart client has helped us more closely align our technology infrastructure with our business goals," says Greg Hansen, Dell senior manager for application development for sales and marketing systems. "Microsoft provided the best tool set for building smart client applications."

The first deployment of IDD began in October 2003 and was finished by mid-December 2004. In January 2005, the program was installed on 8,000 desktops. By May 2007, IDD was deployed to about 45,000 desktops.

IDD provides a holistic view of customers for agents

In the past, sales agents had to use multiple screens to gather information as customers waited. Now those agents have quick and full access to all relevant information. "When a customer calls, the IDD call routing system

identifies the customer and shows his or her contact history on an agent's computer screen," says Rosenstein. "The agent sees a clear picture of the customer, improving the efficiency of the interaction. IDD has the potential to combine the customer's history with other relevant information to generate suggestions as well as recommendations for customized system configuration."

IDD is also integrated with Dell.com, so that the sales agent sees the same graphical interface as the customer. A common interface helps the rep to better understand the customer's interests and questions. IDD also integrates several other capabilities that support the sales process, including call center queue management, contact management credit approval, and sales reporting.

"With IDD, we have an application that brings great tools and features together in a way that's intuitive and easy to use," says Rosenstein. "Now our sales staff can focus exclusively on the customer's needs as opposed to how to use a difficult technology."

IDD offers new customer relations capabilities

Although initially developed as a sales tool, IDD is also providing a broad spectrum of additional customer relations capabilities, including customer care and tech support services. "When we first started down this path, the focus was—and continues to be—sales agent efficiency and effectiveness," says Rosenstein. "But Dell agents from different groups can share the IDD work space and conduct a wide variety of customer interactions. IDD provides a more holistic view of the customer and a very strong platform for managing customer relationships."

Dell plans to further expand the use of IDD to new customer-facing groups and to new geographies. "We are broadening the vision of the IDD," explains Rosenstein. "We want to provide more Dell agents with more information. Anyone who interacts with the customer should have the right information at his or her fingertips. We want to establish the kind of close relationship with customers that they would expect with a small company."

IDD helps Dell sales agents provide streamlined service

The deployment and expansion of IDD to Dell sales agents throughout the company has significantly altered customer relations. IDD helps provide improved customer service, decreased training time, reduced average call duration, increased sales close rate, and improved profitability.

HOW IT WORKS

HARDWARE

- Dell™ OptiPlex™ desktop computers, with Intel® processors
- Dell PowerEdge™ servers, with Intel® Xeon® processors

SOFTWARE

- Integrated Dell Desktop, using Microsoft® .Net Web services development framework
- Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000
- Microsoft Visual Studio® .NET development environment
- Microsoft Windows® XP Professional operating system
- Microsoft Windows Server® 2003 operating system



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— **Michael Rosenstein**
Director of Global Product Management
Sales Marketing Services Tools, Dell

IDD allows reps to configure systems more efficiently, allowing them to devote more time to selling Dell products and reducing call time. The Dell development group attributes about a third of the time savings to the new architecture, such as the integration of the telephony system with a more responsive user interface. "Web solutions require constant roundtrips to the server, at a cost of a few seconds each," says Hansen. "Over the course of day, those small delays can add up to a huge amount of wasted time and activity. The IDD smart client helps avoid that inefficiency by retrieving data once and using it locally during the duration of a call."

IDD is also helping to reduce the time needed to train new sales agents. "Previously, new sales agents trained on the text-based order entry system for at least seven days," says Hansen. "Once they were trained, it took them up to 90 days to meet their sales goals. With IDD, agents need only two days of training, and they are hitting their goals in less than six weeks."

The reduction in training time, the ability of agents to meet goals more quickly, and increased sales margins have clearly justified the cost of developing IDD. "ROI is how we run and prioritize our business—it is part of our daily lives," says Hansen. "IDD has already significantly exceeded ROI expectations."

As Dell continues to expand IDD to customer-facing disciplines, Dell will develop new ways to leverage customer data. "I see an enterprise where everyone can better know the customer and use that data to more efficiently meet the customer's needs," says Hansen. "The possibilities really are endless."



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