



Lotus. software

IBM Lotus Domino Application Delivers the News and brings Computational Systems, Inc. closer to its customers

Overview

Challenges

- Transition from a quarterly, printed publication to a weekly, e-mail newsletter
- Move from a single “one-size-fits all” publication to a series of opt-in, technically oriented newsletters with highly targeted content
- Shorten publication turnaround and staff time devoted to newsletter creation and distribution
- Deliver more timely, useful technical and product information to customers and prospects

Solution

- kNEWS Professional, an IBM® Lotus® Domino™ application developed by IBM Business Partner Gallatin Technologies

Why IBM?

- Application leverages existing IBM Lotus Notes® and Lotus Domino infrastructure
- Newsletter creation and distribution model builds on the core messaging, workflow, and web publishing capabilities of the Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino platform

Key Business Benefits

- Cut \$50,000 from the annual marketing budget for printing and mailing the customer newsletter
- Eliminated more than 200 hours a year from newsletter production work

- Eliminated delay of weeks or months between the time an article is written and the time it gets into customers’ hands
- E-mail newsletter is easy for customers to pass along to others, increasing low-cost, highly qualified sales leads that are delivered directly to product managers
- Developed closer, direct relationship with customers

Key Components

- IBM Lotus Notes
- IBM Lotus Domino
- kNEWS Professional, a Lotus Domino web-publishing application

“Using kNEWS Professional with Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino has allowed us to cut our entire budget for printing and mailing newsletters, and increased our efficiency. More importantly, it helped us renew our personal relationship with our customers.”

- Kim Nichols, Marketing Communications Manager, Computational Systems, Inc.

Profile

Computational Systems, Inc., (CSI) based in Knoxville, Tennessee, sells products and services that analyze and diagnose the health of machinery in manufacturing plants. It is the world’s leading designer, producer, and marketer of condition-monitoring products and services. The company works closely with those who run manufacturing floors and production lines to make sure that plant equipment runs in peak condition.

CSI is part of St. Louis-based Emerson, a global leader in bringing technology and engineering together to provide solutions to customers in process control; electronics and telecommunications; industrial automation; heating, ventilating and air conditioning; and appliances and tools. Emerson sales in fiscal 2000 were \$15.5 billion.

Newsletter production becomes expensive and unwieldy

For several years, CSI sent printed quarterly newsletters to its customer base of 30,000. The newsletters covered a variety of technical issues related to their products, services, and the reliability maintenance industry. The newsletters were in high demand by customers, but they were extremely expensive to produce. Including printing and mailing costs, they cost CSI approximately \$12,000 to \$13,000 for each of the quarterly mailings.

Producing the newsletters also took up a substantial amount of staff time. Because the same newsletter was delivered to CSI's entire customer base, it was difficult to highlight products, services and information relevant to individual subscribers. Additionally, the quarterly mailing schedule meant that CSI's customers were receiving communications from the company only a few times a year.

"It was a valuable tool for us, but it was also labor-intensive and costly," says Kim Nichols, Marketing Communications Manager for CSI. "And as we expanded our product line, we wanted customers to know we were a multi-technology company -- but we couldn't do that, given the limited nature of the quarterly newsletter."

Launching a grassroots e-mail newsletter

In the meantime, one of CSI's product managers, Ray Garvey, an expert in oil analysis for manufacturing equipment, had created an e-mail newsletter discussing ways for his customers to implement oil analysis programs and manage existing programs more successfully. It offered helpful tips and insights and was delivered as a plain text e-mail to a handful of customers every month.

As more and more people subscribed, managing the e-mail list got tougher. The newsletter also lacked a number of potentially useful features, such as an online subscribe / unsubscribe option, and online availability of back issues. Customer response to the Oil Analysis e-newsletter was so positive, however, that several other groups in CSI wanted to publish

their own e-newsletters.

"We wanted to build a custom solution ourselves, but we barely had time even to write the newsletter, and so we certainly didn't have the time to develop the application," remembers Nichols. "We were very frustrated because we wanted to use technology to communicate more effectively with our customers, and we needed to reduce our marketing costs, but we didn't have the available IT resources to develop our own custom application."

Defining the requirements for a complete e-mail solution

CSI began to look for a corporate solution for e-mail newsletters in the Spring of 2000. They wanted a native Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino solution that would let them easily create and manage multiple corporate e-mail lists. They looked at hosted solutions, but maintaining sensitive customer data outside the company was an issue. They needed a solution that would allow end users to create and format content easily since they didn't want their product managers and engineers to spend a lot of time learning a complex application. They also wanted to be able to deliver plain text e-mail messages as well as links to rich content web pages including images, graphics, and diagrams for presenting technical information.

Leveraging Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino for e-mail marketing

CSI soon found "kNEWS Professional" from Gallatin Technologies. This is a communications application that leverages a company's Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino infrastructure. It enables

an enterprise to establish closer relationships with customers by delivering targeted, personalized electronic communications.

kNEWS uses the model of permission and relationship marketing. It enables companies to capture and share their knowledge and expertise efficiently, and to deliver it to their prospects and customers. kNEWS offered CSI a streamlined way to manage the subscribe / unsubscribe process, and to create plain text e-mail communications that are hyper linked to multimedia HTML publications.

Seamlessly implementing the kNEWS publishing tool

It took a single Lotus Notes developer at CSI about two hours to install and set up kNEWS. Most of the parameters in kNEWS are configurable, so CSI was able to customize the application to meet its unique requirements. An IBM Lotus Notes Release 5 (R5) client is used to perform all of the editing, publishing, and administration functions in kNEWS.

Since the application was designed for end-users and uses a familiar Lotus Notes interface, CSI has spent little time training staff. kNEWS editors don't need to know HTML to produce professional Web publications. In less than a week, CSI had created and delivered its first kNEWS publication.

"Bringing it in-house was short and simple," says Nichols. "We're very involved with Lotus Notes, and the fact that it is a plug-in was a major contributing factor in choosing kNEWS."

Cutting costs, increasing efficiency and getting closer to customers

The simplicity of the kNEWS and Lotus Notes combination allowed CSI to quickly launch seven weekly targeted e-mail newsletters. By offering seven different electronic publications covering diverse technology areas like vibration analysis, infrared thermography, and wireless monitoring, CSI continues to establish itself as an industry educator. CSI's knowledge transfer helps attract new business and increases the overall value of their products. Since customers are listening, it is natural for them to look to CSI for other products and services.

Even though seven weekly newsletters are published compared to a single quarterly previously, Nichols has been able to drastically reduce the amount of time she devotes to them. She used to spend four to five hours a week on the quarterly newsletter, "and now I spend in the worst case maybe 30 to 45 minutes per week," she says.

Because newsletters go out on a weekly basis, the lag time between the writing of an article and its publication has been cut dramatically. Printing, mailing and associated costs have been eliminated, and so CSI has been saving \$12,000 to \$13,000 a quarter.

Customer response has been better as well. "We used to get back hundreds of filled-out 'bingo cards' from our old newsletter. But we found that when we sent out expensive literature as a follow-up, there was no return on it. With our e-mail

newsletter, we get very specific and more highly qualified leads that come in immediately to product managers," says Nichols.

Leveraging intellectual capital

CSI is capitalizing on the knowledge of its company experts to deliver value to its marketplace. It encourages product managers and engineers to share their ideas, skills, and experiences directly with customers. These specialists write in-depth articles, discuss different case studies, and offer best practices. Lotus Notes and kNEWS have made it very easy for CSI experts to contribute, organize, and distribute know-how via e-mail and/or the Internet.

The primary focus of CSI's marketing communications efforts is to transfer valuable know-how to customers and prospects in a way that serves both parties. From a business standpoint, it has been a tremendous success. "Not only have we opened a direct line of communication with our customers, but more, we are actively engaged in an intelligent conversation with them," concludes Nichols.

For more information

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