

Customer Case Study

Cablecom GmBH Switzerland

Progress through Transparency and Customer Intimacy

Solution:

Customer Service

Product:

BEA WebLogic Portal™ 8.1
BEA WebLogic Workshop® 8.1

Industry:

Telecommunications

Partners:

R.Ø.S.A.AG

Country:

Switzerland

Business challenge

Streamline and enhance leading Swiss cable network operator's client management system, which was prone to media breaks and a high degree of technical failure. Increase transparency and external availability.

Solution

Deployed a modular portal solution with 25 rich functionalities in four languages on BEA WebLogic Portal. Using the refined concepts and optimum integration of BEA WebLogic Workshop, system was deployed in record time.

Results

Customer achieved 16,000 more satisfied customers in just 60 days and created projected annual savings of around 3.8 million Swiss francs (U.S.\$4.8 million). Future-proof solution delivers ample potential for future developments.

Customer brief

Cablecom is the leading service provider in Switzerland for analogue and digital media, high-speed Internet, and digital telephony in the highly competitive market of cable TV. A powerful customer portal will support the company in orchestrating this growth and in the smooth administration of its modules. And the basis for this portal? A future-proof infrastructure based on BEA WebLogic Portal 8.1.

Cablecom GmbH operates a dedicated, redundant high-power backbone, 6,000 kilometers in length and with a capacity of at least 606 megahertz. This makes it the biggest cable network operator in Switzerland. The company was created in 1994 from the merger of independent cable network companies. It delivers a comprehensive range of services for analogue and digital media, broadband Internet, and telephony. It also provides a broad

range of products for corporate customers. In partnership with other network operators, Cablecom provides services for some two million households. It has a market share of around 74 percent of Swiss cable television and is present in virtually all the major towns and cities in the country.

Business process challenge

Switzerland is well known for setting records. What is less well known is that the country is one of the European leaders when it comes to setting up digital services. The country is also driving the demand for modern telecommunications technology. Around 3.2 million households, 94 percent of Swiss TV customers, have a cable connection, in a population of 7.5 million. More than a quarter of all households in Switzerland have broadband access. This makes the country one of the most developed and fastest growing markets in Europe within the segment of broadband Internet connections. Each year, the Swiss spend more money per capita on telecommunications than any other European Union country, the USA, or Japan.

Maintaining a high profile in this booming market over the long term is a significant achievement for Swiss cable network company Cablecom, particularly since it is the only alternative provider of landline telephone services. Maintaining this position is a significant challenge for the future. Cablecom has left the competition standing with trailblazing offers including free national phone calls and a pay-per-view service on demand for digital films.

Lars Kläger, Business Leader for the Online Portal project at Cablecom, knows what the main challenge will be for the network provider in the future. “Customer relationships are becoming increasingly individual. This doesn’t simply relate to making offers that need to take account of all the various interests of private customers and corporate customers. The processing side looks set to become even more important—transparency, service in real time, and a high level of availability make the difference.”

Cablecom therefore needed to extend its innovative drive to developing a user-friendly SelfCare Customer Portal, whilst simultaneously achieving substantial cost savings by cutting down pressure on the front office. There is more than enough potential for both goals in the business processes of Cablecom, as Kläger said. “Apart from classic areas like commissioning or calling off product information, our prime concern was complex service functionality such as status queries or customer relocations. Users’ increased demand for information resulted in more work in the call center. We were confident that we would be able to provide better results with significantly reduced expenditure by integrating these processes in an effective SelfCare Portal.”

The magnitude of options for rationalization becomes evident once it is made clear that

“The evaluation concluded that BEA’s solutions were by far the best fit in our technical landscape, particularly when it came to the capability for integrating the existing outsourced systems operating within our company.”

Lars Kläger, Business Leader for the Online Portal project, Cablecom

more than 20 percent of customers' queries at Cablecom relate to relocation. Even users of high-speed Internet, cable TV, or digital telephone sometimes move house and naturally they want to take 'their' product with them. This introduces a whole new set of questions: Is the product available in the other city and if it is, which services are available? Is it sufficient to transfer registration to the new address or does this change the basis of the contract? Can modifications or upgrades be undertaken in the existing infrastructure? And if action has been taken, what is the latest status?

"Our goal was that issues which used to be resolved via time-consuming correspondence and phone calls should be dealt with simply and transparently online in the future," said Kläger. "We wanted to enable customers to call up an availability report themselves and register a new address or look at alternatives themselves, without any waiting times, diversions and at any time of the day."

"The flexibility and transparency, coupled with outstanding integration capability, were all in favour of BEA from the very start."

Marky Goldstein, CEO of the Internet service provider, R.Ø.S.A

The plan was for customer input to flow directly into the back-end, at least over the medium term. This would replace expensive and error-prone processing with manual input of trouble tickets in the front office. This would also be a gain in time and service quality that could benefit around 500,000 customers. Apart from processing relocations, the aim was to incorporate around 25 different items of functionality for three different product groups into the portal. In view of the numerous systems, products and services involved, Kläger conceded that this was an ambitious project. "It certainly presented a considerable challenge. There were also the considerations that it had to be implemented in four languages and there was a relatively small window of time."

Solution

The decision to deploy BEA WebLogic Portal was clear-cut. "We concluded that BEA's solutions were by far the best fit in our technical landscape, especially the capability for integrating our existing outsourced systems," said Kläger. "Another deciding factor was that numerous references confirmed the superior operability of BEA WebLogic when it came to flexibility, dependability, lean implementation, and development capability."

This was the key requirement for the success of the project, stressed Marky Goldstein, CEO of the Internet service provider R.Ø.S.A., which had joint responsibility for implementing the project. "We were able to set up a demonstration installation with BEA products in just two hours and we succeeded in constructing the entire project within two months. The flexibility and transparency, coupled with outstanding integration capability, were all in favor of BEA from the very start." It took only four weeks to define the project specifications and evaluate the numerous cases. Following this brief search phase, work on implementing the portal began. The 30-strong team of specialists from Internet Services, Cablecom Inhouse-IT, BEA Support and the application developers from R.Ø.S.A. moved forward extremely quickly, and all time milestones were adhered to.

Darcy de Mestral, Project Manager of the Cablecom Portal, perceives this speed to be one of the benefits of BEA products: “BEA WebLogic Workshop accelerated and simplified the work of our developers—intuitive installation and monitoring via the clear Web interface allow efficient interaction with the BEA WebLogic Portal environment. The BEA WebLogic Workshop development environment provided ideal support for our developers with a range of refined concepts and in-depth integration with WebLogic Server. This facilitated rapid development.” According to de Mestral, the technical concepts were also extremely impressive factors. “Apart from the integrated EJB Compiler, which allowed very efficient and low-error origination of EJBs with the aid of annotations, the pageflows and XML Beans also proved to be extremely valuable tools.”

Use was initially restricted to Semi-SelfCare functionalities—customers use structured querying to communicate questions and queries on a user-friendly, individual HTML interface and thereby open a trouble ticket in the front-end. In this way, manual input of data by the call center agent at the first stage is avoided. An appropriate database was set up in the backend for upcoming Full-SelfCare Services. It contains information from a total of five source systems in a predefined order. All communication between Cablecom and customers is encrypted to guarantee the necessary security; and this allows the online preparation of customer accounts. Three clustered servers create a highly available environment and this guarantees short response times even when the system is subject to high loads. This forms the basis for development of new functionality.

Results

For Kläger, the potential of the solution lies less in its breadth than in its depth. During the coming weeks, the move relocation functionality as well as logons and upgrades will be raised from Semi-SelfCare level to Full-SelfCare level, so that the customer messages can flow directly to the backend via the various processing levels without diversions. “That’s when the portal starts to become exciting,” enthuses Kläger. “These three areas are already allowing us to cover around half the work involved with a direct link to the back office. The streamlining of customer administration, additional savings of time and resources, and smoother, minimal-error handling of critical processes will be the direct result.” According to Kläger, the Cablecom portal initiative has already achieved its most important goals after only a few months.

Cablecom has invested single-digit millions in order to make customer administration simpler, more transparent, and faster. This is an initiative that looks set to improve during the current financial year. “Our portal solution has enabled us to meet a genuine customer requirement,” reports Kläger with considerable pride. “Although the link was not explicitly communicated, we were able to process a total of 16,000 cases via the portal within the first two months.”

Users are also clearly satisfied. As a result of the new interactive line they have been given by Cablecom, they are no longer dependent on the time of day. While the working hours of the call center are restricted, the portal is being accessed more or less continually round the clock. There are 250 fewer phone calls and letters each day, and Cablecom estimates that this represents a saving of 3.8 million francs (U.S.\$4.8 million) annually. Apart from reducing costs, the main priority for Kläger is customer satisfaction: "There are significantly fewer sources of error in processing, and this will take effect following the introduction of the Full-SelfCare functionality. There's also more transparency for customers and a significantly enhanced loyalty to our company." Kläger therefore wants a Full-SelfCare status as a matter of urgency. customers to view the status of their order round the clock. "This would allow every customer to view the status. It is a service people are really interested in," he said.

The portal project has brought a further advantage: After years of restructuring the business and strong growth, reorganization and data harmonization in the front-end and back-end have created more transparency and order. Kläger concluded: "For us, the remodeling as well as linking up the back-end with a view to Service-Oriented Architecture—the hallmark of BEA—are not just convenient side effects. The BEA portal solution has paid off for Cablecom in a number of ways simultaneously. We can see that our requirements and expectations have already been met today, and we will be deriving benefit from our investment for a long time to come."

About BEA

BEA Systems, Inc. (NASDAQ: BEAS) is a world leader in enterprise infrastructure software, providing standards-based platforms to accelerate the secure flow of information and services. BEA product lines—WebLogic®, Tuxedo®, JRockit®, and the new AquaLogic™ family of Service Infrastructure—help customers reduce IT complexity and successfully deploy Service-Oriented Architectures to improve business agility and efficiency. For more information please visit bea.com.

BEA Systems, Inc.

2315 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95131

+1.800.817.4BEA (US)
+1.408.570.8000

bea.com

