

Talkline Focuses on the Customer

Customer knowledge plays a decisive role in the mobile communications market. Talkline has therefore established a customer relationship management (CRM) program with the "KiM" (focus on customer) project in order to increase customer retention and to automate sales processes.

More than 50 percent of all customer relationship management (CRM) projects fail. "Rather than the risk of complete failure, the problem lies in the fact that CRM launches are realised very slowly, with large cost overruns and without acceptance among the employees of the functional departments", explains Professor Peter Winkelmann. "There is no clearly defined CRM strategy and there are too many parties that want to have their cake and eat it, too."

Winkelmann ought to know. He coaches numerous CRM projects in its position as chair of Marketing and Sales at the University for Applied Sciences in Landshut, Germany. Moreover, he is a member of the CRM expert council that conducts a yearly survey on CRM initiatives. Holger Gasau, IT Division Manager, and Frank Wehmeier, Manager of the IT application development at the mobile communications provider Talkline were aware of the risks that might arise when implementing CRM. "That's why we have decided to realise the CRM program KiM in baby steps together with the IT service provider and consulting company Devoteam and not in a 'knee-jerk' action", explains Gasau. The benefit of this concept of phases is

About Talkline

The Talkline group has been one of the leading telecommunications providers in Germany over the past years and is a 100-percent subsidiary of the debitel AG in Stuttgart.

The Talkline group includes the mobile service provider Talkline GmbH & Co. KG (Elmshorn) and the mobile communications discounter callmobile GmbH & Co. KG (Hamburg).

The company has approximately 850 employees and, in business year 2006, achieved an EBITDA of approx. 85 million euros with a revenue slightly above one billion euros.. Established as a mobile communications service provider in 1991, Talkline has more than 3.7 million subscribers.

more than obvious: "The risks of miscalculation and overestimation that finally lead to shipwreck can be minimised."



Talkline headquarters: Customer retention with service and good support

Moreover, success is perceptible and can be measured after each small step, which leads to a growing acceptance on behalf of the users as the project advances. The small steps allow adjusting the project to the current market situation. This would not have been possible in a knee-jerk action.

Managing Customer Relations

Talkline even did not miss to clearly define the strategy and the targets for the CRM implementation, which according to professor Winkelmann is ignored in many projects: Within the KiM project, transparency should be applied to the customer lifecycle management, from the initial contact to the contract duration and to a possible termination of a mobile contract.

"Our aim is to get a 360 degree view of the customer", explains Wehmeier. In a rather saturated market such as the mobile communications market, the service and the customer care are the key USPs. "New customers are important, but each customer that we can retain is an asset and allows for selling upscale products", says Wehmeier.

To achieve this 360 degree view of the customer, it is important to know a lot about the customer and to be able to serve him very well – no matter how he came to Talkline. The provider supports multi-channel sales, thus keeping up with the time: Direct sales is realised via the website or call centre, while regional sales is supported through approximately 1200 sales distributors.

Redesigning Processes

The existing systems have not provided sufficient data transparency. The sales and order management processes were not sufficiently integrated and the functional volume had to be adapted to the extended needs of the mobile subscribers. With the aim of redesigning and automating the required business processes, the KiM project was launched at the beginning of 2005.

"In the initial selection, systems of Siebel, PeopleSoft, and Clarity were considered. PeopleSoft extensively covered our required functionalities out-of-the-box already. So the choice was clear", remembers Stephan Pastuschka, Project Manager of KiM Step 1. "PeopleSoft CRM" was planned to become the technical kernel of the KiM project. The software is distributed by Oracle.

"Not only the functional volume, but the integration potential as well is an outstanding asset of the software", adds Pastuschka. "This criterion was important, because CRM will be gradually extended to a central customer system, but we have a number of other applications that are connected to this system and exchange data." Among these are the billing system, the logistics and financial system as well as evaluation systems.

Competent Partners

Holger Gasau continued that after the software had been chosen, Devoteam as a leading implementation partner for PeopleSoft in the German-speaking market was selected to guarantee a successful realisation of the project. "The Devoteam consultants promised to deploy highly competent staff for the implementation who not only have good knowledge of the software but as well a sound understanding of business processes within the mobile communications market", explains Pastuschka.

"One of our main tasks was to provide Talkline with consultative support in designing their business processes", adds Michael Jessing, Head of Business Information and Telematic Solutions at Devoteam. "Moreover, we have implemented the requirements in the software and successfully integrated existing systems into the new CRM platform."

Devoteam's customer reference Inmarsat, a global provider of mobile satellite telecommunications services, finally convinced the decision makers at Talkline. The first part of the KiM project is already in service and supports more than 100 employees in their direct sales tasks with prospects. No matter whether customers use Internet,

e-mail or phone to get in touch with Talkline, they will get the best service. All processes, from order processing to automated credit check and right up to the delivery via logistics services are consistent. "All orders placed until 2 p.m., will be delivered to the customer on the next day"; that is the promise. Furthermore, complaint management functionalities have been implemented.

With KiM Step 2, Talkline is currently implementing the requirements for the campaign management of prospects. About 10 marketing employees are using this feature for developing measures such as mailings or outbound activities for the call centre. The interaction of functional marketing activities and their performance measurement play here a decisive role. "We can precisely track the performance results of each campaign and can modify the activities accordingly", says Rico Janssen, IT Project Manager for Step 2.

At the same time, KiM Step 3 which is the Partner Portal has started. It integrates the sales distributors into this process and is being tested by four sales distributors. Via Web, all partners should have access to the same functionalities as the Talkline sales and customer care. Andreas Stich, IT Project Manager of KiM Step 3 is very proud of the rapid progress this project is making.

After the initial project phases, Wehmeier can look back on a well done job. "KiM optimises our customer-oriented processes as planned and helps us to further automate tasks. There can be no question of failure."

About Devoteam

Devoteam is an award winning EMEA leader in Connecting Business & Technology, specializing in information system infrastructures and telecommunications. Headquartered in France with 5,000 employees in 25 countries across EMEA, it achieved a 2010 turnover of €0.5 billion. Combining consulting and technology solutions enables Devoteam to provide its customers with independent advice and effective solutions that meet their strategic objectives. Our Consulting services range from idea and high level business advice through choice of technology solutions to organisational IT centric transformation implementations and change in large & complex IT projects. Our Solutions teams have the skills, experience and methodologies to deliver large and complex IT implementations across a range of technologies. Our Expertise of IT specialists are available for hire on-demand, accessible through a consulting service, providing our clients with highly specialised subject matter experts both locally and across EMEA.