

ABB Automation Business Synopsis

A 5 billion-dollar division of 24 billion-dollar ABB Inc., ABB Automation develops automation systems and control software for the chemical, pharmaceutical and utility industries. With 152,000 employees in over 100 countries, ABB Inc. is a global leader in power and automation.

The Automation Service organization services approximately seventeen (17) business units within various different divisions, and spans across all of these industries by providing product and service support for all ABB Automation's products and customers worldwide.

ABB Automation Service Business Problems & Goals

ABB's U.S. Automation Service organization's main business issues and goals included improving customer service, reducing costs and increasing operational efficiencies.

Improving Customer Service

In terms of improving customer service, ABB Automation Services found it necessary to provide a single point of contact for its global clients such as International Paper, BASF, and Dow Chemicals. By moving to PowerHelp CRM entirely web-based application (not web-enabled), and integrating other purpose-built applications utilizing PowerHelp CRM as the hub, Automation Service is able to provide consistent, high-quality global support by leveraging CIM technology in their support strategy.

Reducing Costs

ABB Automation Service also felt that eliminating double entry into numerous CRM support applications could reduce several costs including tangible costs such as administration and annual maintenance fees on other applications, as well as costs associated with supporting and maintaining those applications.

Increasing Operational Efficiencies

Increasing operational efficiencies would be attained by integrating additional applications such as a proposal tracking system into the core PowerHelp CRM system so that there would be a single customer database for use not only by the call center and technical support agents, but also for service and sales agents as well. This would reduce duplication of customer and product data, and would increase visibility between the acceptance of service maintenance agreements and support center and service delivery.

ABB Automation Services' Technical Problems & Goals

On the technology side, ABB Automation Service wanted to move from client-server based technology to web-based technology to eliminate the overhead of maintaining the client application, as well as to enable additional countries to access the system quickly and easily via a browser 24 x 7.

Also, by using a combination of PowerHelp CRM web services and XML, integration to the various mission critical applications would occur much faster and cleaner than with the client-server application.

Quantifying the Objectives of the Project

ABB Automation Service is expecting to attain returns on their investment both financially and in the area of customer satisfaction. They feel a conservative estimate regarding the Return on Investment (ROI) would come from 3 primary areas. These areas include:

- Reducing time and complexity of customization and integration by leveraging PowerHelp CRM's PowerStudio tool set,
- Reducing duplicate data entry and application administration costs by integration with core ABB Automation Service business systems, and
- Improving the customer's service experience by implementing multiple communication channels such as email, web forms, phone support and chat to be funneled to a single database in PowerHelp.

Evaluating PowerHelp

VSI and ABB Inc. worked together as a team to implement PowerHelp. ABB Automation Service had been a client of Vertical Solutions, Inc. (VSI) for nearly five (5) years using VSI's PowerHelp 5 application. With a plethora of new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems in abundance over the past few years, various groups throughout the world went through reviewing competitive applications such as Siebel and Peoplesoft.

However, after careful review by a business improvement team, the U.S. Automation Services organization decided to protect their original investment due to their high vendor satisfaction and the realization that they would receive the largest value by going this route. And with over five (5) integrations to ABB-specific applications jointly completed successfully over the past years, the synergy between the two companies was proven and strong. A decision was made to move to VSI's next generation PowerHelp application, which encompassed a completely different architecture. In essence, this was an entirely new implementation to a new application with similarities to the previous version.

James Crowl, Director, Call Centers & Customer Service, highlights benefits of the partnership when he states,

Vertical Solutions has been a great business partner to ABB over the past 4 to 5 years. They are very responsive to our technical and business needs, and they have also extended extraordinary efforts to help us complete the PowerHelp CRM implementation and integration projects by applying the appropriate resources and providing direct access to their experts when required.

Because of this close relationship, VSI offers ABB first glance at many new PowerHelp CRM features and accepts our input during the development phase. This results in a product that is well suited to our customer support requirements.

*James Crowl
Director, Call Centers & Customer Support*

Innovative Technology & Integration Capabilities

Because PowerHelp CRM is the centralized repository for all data associated with U.S. Automation Service's field service organization, the need to be able to adjust the application to meet dynamic business process that arise as well as pull in additional groups quickly under one application was key.

Essentially, a few PowerHelp CRM components eased implementation and integration for ABB Automation. These components included PowerStudio (enabling the customization of how the system functions at the data layer level via XML), PowerServices (enabling VSI and ABB to quickly integrate to various systems via web services technology), PowerHelp CRM System Console & Monitoring (enabling ABB to drill down to any part of the application, database or network to proactively determine possible problem areas before they arise).

PowerHelp CRM was also one of the only applications to web enable the entire system administration function so that a system administrator traveling anywhere in the world at any time of day has the ability to make changes and administer the application as they see fit.

Specific ABB Automation Service Integrations

The initial sub projects scoped for the new implementation included integration to:

- an external knowledge base (ServiceSoft) and content management system for searching from within PowerHelp CRM CRM,
- ABB Automation Service's web-based time entry system for single click entry from PowerHelp CRM,
- a database for tracking telephone support contracts for the tracking of time, customer billing, and delivery of services against the SLA.
- ABB group email boxes for the auto-generation of PowerHelp CRM cases from customer correspondences. This is also used for outbound emails from within the PowerHelp CRM application.
- interactive chat (Divine's NetAgent) for capturing sessions between ABB call center agents and customers into PowerHelp CRM call records
- complex reporting tool using cubing technology from Cognos,
- ABB's service web site to provide customers with direct entry and online tracking of PowerHelp call records.

Using Technology to Streamline Business Processes

All integrations were completed using a combination of web services and XML by a combination of ABB Automation Services staff and VSI staff. By utilizing such leading edge technology, it enabled ABB much more versatility in what could be accomplished with lesser key strokes and in an more logical manner (i.e. omitting the continuous log off and on of various systems).

The key in using this technology was simply to streamline business processes in an effort to ease the jobs of the call center agents, the dispatchers and the sales staff.

A good example is ABB Automation Services' decision to integrate time entry, contract management and research and development. The end result is that when a caller calls in with an issue, research can be performed immediately, the issue may be sent to R&D seamlessly while the billing is completed in the background based upon actions occurring during the process. What this amounts to is that decisions on billing are based on business rules running in the background, not on one agent's understanding over another. In the end, the billing is more accurate, the customer is provided rapid customer service, and the agent is free to spend more time assisting additional customers.

Working Together: ABB Automation Services & Vertical Solutions

ABB Automation Services and VSI worked as a tightly knit team on the implementation with assistance from two (2) to four (4) individuals from ABB and one (1) to three (3) individuals from VSI. Whereas VSI provided tools' training, both organizations worked together on the implementation. A portion of VSI's training was formal training to enable ABB Automation Services system administrators to quickly create changes with the application to enable them to have further autonomy.

One of the key reasons ABB chose VSI was VSI's inherent philosophy in enabling its clients to become vendor independent if they choose. This philosophy also entails making sure that the appropriate number of resources is actively working only when necessary. For example, if it was only necessary for one or two members of the VSI team to be assigned on the majority of the implementation, then services from VSI were set up and billed accordingly. ABB knew that extraneous resources were not being billed simply because they were assigned to the account.

This resulted in strengthening the partnership and in an implementation that was completed on time, under budget and within scope within the projected two and a half (2½) months.

ABB Automation Services' Previous Quantifiable Results

With the previous implementation of PowerHelp CRM, ABB Automation Services realized a one hundred and seventy five thousand dollars (175K) per year savings. In 2000, the group estimated a significant seventy-one percent (71%) increase in income with only a six percent (6%) increase in headcount illuminating the fact that a group that was once looked upon as a cost center had developed into a profit center.

ABB Automation Services' PowerHelp Quantifiable Results

The goals for PowerHelp CRM then had to impact an already impressive return on investment. The three main areas where ABB Automation Services felt they would gain a minimum, tangible return on investment to meet their business objectives of improving customer satisfaction, reducing costs, and increasing operational efficiencies include:

Reducing the Time and Complexity of Customization and Integration

ABB Automation Services felt that by leveraging PowerHelp CRM PowerStudio tool set during the new implementation, it would enable them in the long run to become more autonomous. The ease of customizing forms alone had a conservative estimate of twenty thousand (\$20,000) in the first year due to the needs of the new groups utilizing PowerHelp CRM, and the additional dynamic business needs of the company as it grows.

By utilizing recently trained ABB resources during the implementation, ABB Automation Services saved fifteen (\$15,000) to twenty thousand (\$20,000) dollars minimum in VSI consulting services. Additional cost savings will continue to rise as the year progresses, and modifications occur with little VSI involvement.

Reducing Duplicate Data Entry and Application Administration Costs

Although various ABB Automation Service business systems have been integrated to PowerHelp CRM, one integration that has an immediate impact on their return on investment is the integration with their Service Proposal Tracking system.

By integrating PowerHelp CRM and the Service Proposal Tracking system, the reduction in data entry of customers, callers, prospects, and billing occurs immediately. Resources have been allocated to handle more work, decreasing the need to hire additional agents, and customers are empowered to help themselves if they so desire.

Although it's difficult to project the cost savings impact in just 5 weeks after ABB's go live date, the yearly projected savings is to be upwards of forty-thousand dollars (\$40,000) in savings, with thousands of dollars saved already.

Improving the Customer's Service Experience

By implementing multiple communication channels (such as email, web forms, phone support and chat) to be funneled through to PowerHelp, ABB Automation Services felt that each customer's experience would be greatly enhanced. Not only did they believe that customer satisfaction would be positively impacted, but they felt they would receive tangible results as well.

Tracking subscriptions for phone support, web site support and software maintenance within the same database is expected to provide an additional forty-five thousand dollars (\$45,000) in savings. Providing multi-channel access via a single point of contact and into a single database improves customer loyalty, decreases agent errors and increases the speed and accuracy in which ABB receives the information for billing purposes.

Currently, with the integration of Lotus Notes to open services requests, ABB has experienced a considerable decrease in the amount of time an agent spends on a service request from four (4) minutes down to approximately thirty (30) seconds (for those that have come in via the Lotus Notes gateway). This is a significant administrative savings considering the U.S. call center handles approximately forty thousand (40,000) general email transactions each month.

Overall ABB Automation Services' Immediate and Estimated Results

ABB's U.S. Automation Services is conservatively estimating a total savings of over one hundred and five thousand dollars (\$105,000) during the initial phases of their CRM service implementation with additional time savings of customers opening their own service requests. And due to the VSI and ABB Automation Service's success in the U.S., the use of PowerHelp CRM in other countries such as Canada, Germany, Sweden and Finland is projected to produce a minimum of this for other business segments which would take this estimate upwards of four hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$450,000).

ABB's customer experience has been enhanced due ABB Automation Services three hundred and sixty (360) degree view of all service interactions worldwide. The ability of global multi-channel, streamlined service for worldwide ABB customers has opened the door for more companies to attain higher levels of easy-to-use support with ABB's state of the art global service operation.

Although less in tangible results, the ability for ABB Automation Services to better adhere to Service Level Agreements (SLA's), increase response times, provide trending on products types and versions of products, and view statistics associated with time to fix and time to respond, are all more well honed due to ABB Automation Services implementation of PowerHelp CRM. Added flexibility available in the new architecture provides ABB with more power to expand as their business needs change and grow.

Current Status of the PowerHelp CRM Implementation

The PowerHelp phase I implementation is fully operational and has been rolled out to 120 concurrent U.S. users as of the week of June 10, 2002. 50 additional concurrent users in the countries of Canada, Sweden, Germany and Finland are scheduled to go live within the next few months as well.

The actual go-live event went smoothly and as expected. In the U.S., PowerHelp CRM is utilized for tracking after market services such as on-site service requests, technical support, customer help desk, parts logistics, and sales referrals. This implementation, and the expanded use of PowerHelp to the four (4) additional countries, coincides with the release of additional complex ABB products where the global need for a central information system for tracking customer contracts and product issues and solutions was key for quality assurance purposes.

Future Outlook, Opportunities & Challenges

The future outlook between ABB Automation Services and VSI is inherently strong due to the open and honest working relationship that has fostered over the past years as well as with this new implementation.

Ron Wegmann, President of Vertical Solutions, furthers this opinion stating:

With ABB embracing our new totally web based PowerHelp, VSI has an outstanding opportunity to deploy almost all facets of its product suite in a global enterprise. Implementation of features such as customer portal, contract entitlement management, and mobile palm solutions will be additions to the core of ABB's customer satisfaction initiative.

Equally significant is the new set of Power access tools that will allow easy integration to a variety of internal legacy systems including ABB's preferred ERP system that will provide much needed multi-source information.

The opportunities for ABB Automation Services to continually meet the dynamic demands of their customers by using technology to streamline their business processes will remain. As new technology appears on the forefront, and is applied by technology firms like VSI, opportunities to assist and provide specific tool sets and applications to increase revenues and customer satisfaction for its clients and their customers like ABB, will continue as well.

The challenges are in weighing the investment against the benefits, and in confirming that implementing new technologies is occurring at the appropriate time. Technology implemented that does not meet and resolve the business objectives and problems will only hinder a company's ability to move ahead.

ABB has been thorough and cautious, and at the same time has plunged forward with leading edge technology in their quest for streamlining their service organization's processes. In the end, one of the largest challenges is simply in the acceptance of technology by the users.

A carefully laid out plan, with acceptance and input from executive management all the way through input from the end user community ---with room for growth and expansion, and a team that works together for the true betterment of the company---that's what encompasses ABB Automation Services' success.