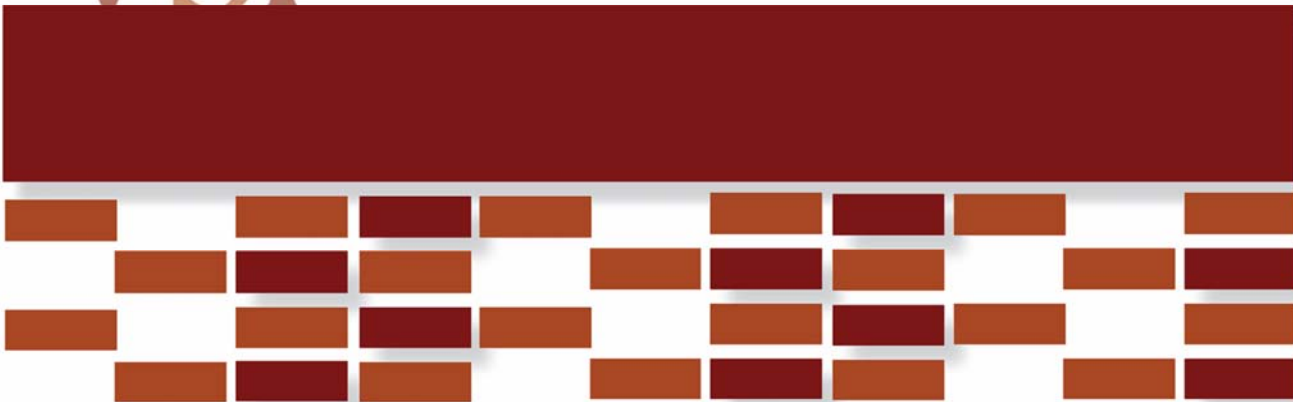


Case Study –A.O. Smith Unlocks Valuable Customer Data Using PowerHelp®

Vsi



POWERHELP

DRIVE SALES • RETAIN CUSTOMERS • MANAGE SERVICE



A.O.Smith Unlocks Valuable Customer Data Using PowerHelp®

Acquisitions can drive business growth when companies are willing to review processes and systems and deploy technology that enables them to build upon their strengths. These are among the lessons learned by A.O.Smith Water Products Company, North America's largest manufacturer and marketer of residential and commercial water heating equipment. The company has built its reputation by focusing on customers, but after making significant acquisitions in 2001 and 2006, A.O. Smith recognized that it needed to develop a cohesive, global customer service vision. It worked with Vertical Solutions, Inc. (VSI) to deploy its PowerHelp® software solution to enable the company to access and mine vast stores of customer data while revamping its customer service processes.

In October 2006, A.O. Smith worked with VSI to evaluate its existing processes and modernize some of its techniques. The company worked with cross-functional groups including the call centers, warranty department, and sales personnel to document processes, share best practices, and tailor the PowerHelp® application to optimize the customer experience. According to Mike Rosenstock, Director of Customer Quality, Field Service and Warranty for A.O. Smith Water Products Company, "This process allowed us to take the opportunity to go beyond installing a software platform and take a close look at what we could do to enhance the customer experience. We optimized not only our capabilities with the PowerHelp® software, but optimized what we knew worked best for our customers across the combined disciplines."

Accessing Trapped Data

Through its 70 years of history, A.O. Smith Water Products Company had developed volumes of data and multiple knowledge base systems, as well as information from the acquisitions. The company knew that it needed better access to the information that would help it not only improve customer service, but also product development and overall company performance. It chose VSI's PowerHelp® technology to streamline and consolidate its contact center, customer support, product, and field service data and processes. Goals were to be able to improve the customer service experience by enabling all service agents to quickly and easily access data from disparate, legacy sources; to make certain that new customers were welcomed into A.O. Smith by receiving a consistent level of support as core customers; and to ensure that its technology would be robust enough to serve as a platform for future customer service initiatives.

A.O. Smith's repository of historical information was an enormous asset, but as much of it was contained in older systems, it was quickly becoming inaccessible. The acquisitions increased its number of data sources; the company determined it needed a technology platform that would integrate all of these disparate data, provide a central access point, and enable the company to mine the information more effectively and efficiently. VSI has significant expertise in working with many different technologies, including those that are obscure or difficult, and it created a web-service approach that "calls out" to each of the 11 A.O. Smith Water Products Company databases to retrieve information. PowerHelp® is robust, tapping into databases created in Oracle, Access, SQL, and AS400 command-line systems as well as via various applications.

PowerHelp's® integration offers A.O. Smith a holistic view of customer data, including warranty information, service history, plumber skill sets and geographic availability, and more than 70 fields of product-specific information including everything from altitude requirements to efficiency statistics. VSI's PowerHelp® offers problem-resolution information in five cascading levels of detail, which enables the company to mine and understand historical data as well as to easily incorporate data from newly acquired companies.



A.O. Smith Water Products Company is using this treasure trove of information to improve customer service as well as improve company performance overall. PowerHelp® aggregates data on any parameter, enabling A.O. Smith to get a holistic picture at any point in time rather than waiting for end-of-month, or end-of-quarter reports. This process is integral to driving customer satisfaction.

Adding Up Results

Within its first two months of deployment of PowerHelp®, A.O. Smith Water Products Company had made significant progress toward its customer service goals of answering customer calls quicker, reducing the number of times a customer had to be transferred to reach a subject expert, and reducing the time required to research customer history:

- Calls are now answered 2.5 times faster, because PowerHelp® enables CSRs to record call information via drop-down pick lists rather than by typing lengthy answers. CSRs no longer need to spend extra time completing notes and closing calls and instead are answering the next call much faster.
- Call transfers have been reduced by 20 percent as a result of the PowerHelp® integration, since CSRs now have access to multiple data bases with a click of a button directly from their screens, they no longer need to find subject matter experts to whom they can transfer calls.
- With PowerHelp®, all calls are logged by product serial number, enabling CSRs to collect all information on a product with a click of a button.
- A.O. Smith has shaved one minute off of each call, for a 15 percent reduction in talk time.

With VSI's PowerHelp® technology, A.O. Smith Water Products Company has created a bridge from its past to its future. The company has expanded its project from three to over 10 phases, with new ideas in development. The company is exploring new ways to streamline processes, and has improved interactivity from people to data, and people-to-people, no matter where they are located. It has created a path to leverage existing and forthcoming communications technologies, making its workforce more efficient, productive, and effective. With PowerHelp®, A.O. Smith is now able to act on innovative thinking that will enable it to achieve its goal of being a world-class leader in customer service.

About A.O. Smith Corporation

A.O. Smith Corporation, with headquarters in Milwaukee, WI. is one of the world's largest manufacturers and marketers of residential and commercial water heating equipment and a leading manufacturer of electric motors. A.O. Smith employs approximately 18,000 people at facilities in the United States, Mexico, China, Canada, and Europe. For more information, visit www.AOSmith.com.

About PowerHelp®

By developing technology based on two decades worth of experience in field service and support, VSI's PowerHelp®, with its unified architectural design, provides a "closed loop" process that leverages and consolidates critical sales, contact center, and field service information across the enterprise. An integrated mobile solution extends the competitive advantage to the field with quick, efficient, and timely information that enhances the customer experience. PowerHelp® customers include ABB Automation, GBC Division of ACCO Brands, Rubbermaid, and Mitsubishi.

About Vertical Solutions, Inc. (VSI)

VSI develops, implements, and supports its award-winning PowerHelp® suite of customer-experience management software solutions. PowerHelp® is a robust, modular application that offers in-depth functionality for Customer Support, Field Service, Sales and Marketing Automation, and Mobile environments. Companies in a variety of industries and throughout the world use PowerHelp® to improve service response and resolution times, reduce the costs of delivering service, capture actionable customer data, seamlessly integrate with external partners, and broaden their portfolio of service offerings. PowerHelp® is flexible, integrates easily with legacy systems, and offers one of the industry's fastest deployment times, all of which contribute to its low total cost of ownership and high return on investment. The company's customer list is 100-percent referenceable, and includes General Binding Corp., Reynolds and Reynolds, ABB Automation, and A.O. Smith Water Products Company. VSI is headquartered in Cincinnati, OH, with offices and partners worldwide. Fast ... Powerful ... Guaranteed.

Vertical Solutions, Inc.

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www.VSI-PowerHelp.com

