

PSC Portal Case Study



One Great Collaborative Portal, Freshly Brewed!

The Problem – Providing Real-Time Information to Customers

A well known restaurant equipment manufacturer (with a who's who clientele including P&G, Kraft, Starbucks, McDonalds, and 7-11) wanted to provide timelier product support, maintenance, and customer service, and a faster way to develop new products. They also wanted to offer their customers something the competition could not do -- meaningful intelligence about their business operations. In other words, they wanted to develop their industry's most advanced portal – a portal that was used internally by their own staff and externally by their customers. They wanted a portal that could give them real-time information about their equipment as well as provide their customers with information about its production output. They wanted to take advantage of being the market leader with a new level of collaboration.

The Solution – A Comprehensive, Collaborative Approach

As with most businesses, the client had plenty of information. They had information in their ERP, CRM and business systems. They also Internet enabled several products to collect field information about maintenance status, malfunctions, and break-downs. This information was being used internally to schedule routine service maintenance and break-down repairs. It was also being used for the design of repair kits, equipment upgrades, and new product development.

The solution was to build a collaborative portal that could securely connect anyone and everyone to the information that was scattered throughout the business process, both internally and externally including customers and suppliers. By combining IBM's WebSphere Portal with Information Builder's WebFOCUS, PSC was able to provide a single point access to information about equipment maintenance as well as product consumption. Data from installed equipment is collected over the Internet and stored on a host System i. WebFOCUS gathers the data where it is then presented as Operational Business Intelligence (OBI) on the manufacturer's WebSphere Portal.

The Benefits – Competitive Advantage

Not only do all parties in the business process have greater access to the information they need, but the new level of collaboration has given both the manufacturer and their customers a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Great Customer Service. Knowing that the equipment a restaurant depends on for its bread and butter is being well cared for is more than a "nice-to-have." A restaurant without product is a restaurant without customers, so equipment failure can be catastrophic. Although it is not a perfect world, with the proper information technology, it can come quite close. If a piece of equipment can "tell" you when and why it has failed or is about to fail and that information can be passed instantly to those in the field, you can have the next best thing. Put a portal and a browser together with that information in the right way, and you will have truly effective customer-vendor collaboration.

New Product Development. The new portal technology has reduced the time and expense of new product development as well as provided the ability to have 24x7 communication with customers on new product features and status. Given the competitiveness of the industry, the portal also provides a highly secure environment so that confidentiality can be maintained.

The Technology

- IBM WebSphere Portal
- Information Builders WebFOCUS
- IBM System i

The Benefits

- One portal for all users
- Access to all information
- Easily modified
- Marketplace advantage provided by Operational Business Intelligence



It's all in the way we listen.®

PSC Group, LLC is an information-technology and professional services consulting firm that specializes in business process architecture and back-end integration.

We have extensive experience in the integration of portal, collaboration and business intelligence products with a variety of applications, processes and systems including ERP, CRM, HR, VoIP, and Workflow.

CONTACT:

John Quirk
office: 800.592.8003
direct: 847.969.8466
jquirk@psclistens.com

PSC Group, LLC
Chicago, Kansas City,
Minneapolis
www.psclistens.com

Operational Business Intelligence (OBI). Both the manufacturer and their customers now have better visibility into what and how their businesses are doing. They can check at any time to determine the state of their products. Manufacturers can keep track of equipment quality and earmark those models that are performing well and those that are not. The equipment users can monitor the production; make marketing or pricing adjustments to meet consumer demand, and plan replenishment.

The Underlying Strategy – Information Command Control™

Portal and Business Intelligence technology is exploding. By combining portal technology with Service Oriented Architecture (SOA), and information management tools, companies can create an environment where operational information can be accessed, controlled and shared by all stakeholders -- as it happens. This is why those enterprises with these capabilities are market leaders.

Today's leaders have an operational "view" of their core business processes and enterprise applications at all levels within their organization. They have taken accumulations of data, traditionally generated from back-office systems and stored for later use, and turned it into something much more useful. Information Command and Control™ is not about data warehouses and reports, it is about providing information in context – as you need it, where you need it, and when you need it. By staging information and delivering it at the right time we can create knowledge; and by combining information about our environment/situation -- putting it in the right context -- we create the wisdom we need to take our business to the next level.

The strategy for this project, therefore, was to find and deliver as much information as possible to those who needed to make the daily decisions that are part of running any business. We had to provide that information in a collaborative environment that would provide key real-time customer metrics and other information to desk tops, laptops, and PDA's so decisions could be made with the greatest amount of knowledge and wisdom.

Because the business climate is constantly changing and no two businesses are the same, a rules-based approach that incorporates a flexible architecture is the path to take. Since there is no one product that could do this, the solution requires an architectural approach that includes the implementation and integration of multiple products.

IBM WebSphere Portal and WebFOCUS: Working Together

The biggest challenge in this project was accessing data and presenting it to the various constituencies. Since the users were both internal employees and external suppliers and customers, a customizable, web-based portal with secure browser access was the only solution. On the information side, the requirements were much the same. With information sources just about everywhere – ERP, CRM, products development, customer service work flow, and at equipment locations – the back-end part of the solution required an universal access and reporting tool.

Another facet that had to be considered was that the environment was very dynamic. The mix of users and source of information was constantly changing, which meant that the solution had to be flexible as well as dynamic. This means the solution had to be more of an architecture and rules-based framework than an off-the-shelf product.

IBM WebSphere Portal 6.0 and Information Builder's WebFOCUS 7.0 were selected as the solution of choice for several reasons. WebSphere Portal V6, a key component in IBM's service-oriented architecture (SOA) approach, makes it easier for end-users to use and to customize the portal to deliver the information they need. WebFOCUS 7.0 is a comprehensive and fully integrated enterprise business intelligence platform whose architecture, integration, and simplicity make it easier to access data -- any and all data that is meaningful to a person or application. Because of their common architectural approach and WebSphere's "out of the box" integration with WebFOCUS, the two solutions, working together, became the obvious choice for this project.

For more information about this case study and other portal projects, contact PSC at portal@psclisten.com

