IBM

Brau Union enriches IBM e-commerce solution with mobile sales force automation system.

Overview

■ **Challenge**

Brau Union's outdated processes for managing customer accounts were preventing its sales force from sensing competitive changes in the marketplace, hindering its ability to compete effectively

■ **Why Become an On Demand Business?**

Brau Union needed to respond more efficiently to customer needs by providing its sales staff with instant and continuous access to product, customer and competitor information

■ **Solution**

Brau Union implemented a sales force automation solution that gives sales representatives mobile, realtime access to current business data

■ **Key Benefits**

Four times faster sales analysis due to automated data entry; increased customer satisfaction through more responsive sales representatives; improved competitiveness through more agile response to market trends

With nonstop access to customer information, Brau Union's sales reps work more productively in the field.

Residents of the small Hungarian town of Sopron at the foot of the Austrian Alps have a long history of enjoying locally produced ale and beer. This custom began more than 100 years ago, with the First Sopron Brewery and Malt Factory's inaugural shipment in 1896.

Today, Brau Union Hungaria Breweries Company (BUH) allows that tradition to continue with more than 820 employees producing nearly 41 million gallons of beer per year, generating 29.8 billion Hungarian Forints (US$141 million). Its flagship brand, Soproni Aszok, is renowned among beer connoisseurs

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– Károly Pirger, IT Manager, Brau Union

ON DEMAND BUSINESS™

Realtime business processes lead to greater efficiencies and productivity

On Demand Business Benefits

- Realtime, mobile access to business data enables sales representatives to close more sales through competitive pricing and better efficiency, increasing revenues annually
- Four times faster analysis of data collected in the field supports more agile response to market trends, increasing competitiveness
- Ability to respond to customers in a more timely and relevant manner has improved customer satisfaction
- Refined business processes have eliminated labor-intensive and error-prone manual procedures, thereby reducing overhead costs
- New integrated, open and scalable IT solution is both resilient and flexible

worldwide, and is part of a product line sold throughout Hungary by more than 150 beer distributors. In fact, after its acquisition of the Heineken franchise, BUH (*www.brauunion.com*) became the country's market-leading brewery.

Manual system slowed corporate response

In the Hungarian beer market, BUH's success depends on maintaining excellent relationships with both its wholesale and direct customers. On the wholesale side, BUH had strengthened its competitiveness by implementing an e-commerce Web site enabling wholesale customers to easily order products and generate reports online.

The company's direct-sales processes, however, had grown outdated and Brau Union was quickly facing a competitive problem. It was feeling the pressure that its sales force was not able to sense competitive changes in the marketplace, because they had no way to access key business information while in the field. Compounding the situation, sales managers at the corporate office lacked up-to-date information about what the field force was accomplishing each day. These inefficient communications processes were hampering Brau Union's ability to maintain and grow its business.

"If a competing beer distributor discounts a particular product and our sales representatives don't know about it, the customer will buy from the competitor and we lose that business," says Károly Pirger, IT manager, Brau Union. "Even worse, our ongoing relationship with that customer can be jeopardized. Producing great beers and ales isn't enough. We have to back up our products with better procedures for servicing our customers, or they won't be our customers for long."

Faster information flow to and from the field

Brau Union realized it needed to implement a new business process that would provide its sales force with instant and continuous access to product, customer and competitive information—radically improving its responsiveness to the marketplace. Doing so would create a much more nimble and agile sales force, arming it with the tools needed to maintain a competitive edge. And, it needed a fast, accurate way to communicate account data back to the home office, where sales managers could determine business trends and respond with price changes and special offers.

Speedy, accurate electronic communication

To bolster its competitive advantage with a better information flow, Brau Union implemented a mobile sales force automation system that seamlessly connects the company's external and internal business processes. The system includes

a mobile component that provides sales representatives with realtime access to information as well as capabilities such as lead tracking.

Now, BUH's mobile workers have the ability to handle scheduling, order entry, order status, promotions and pricing requests in realtime. The new solution provides field teams with uninterrupted access to sales, invoicing, inventory tracking, order fulfillment and other key customer-related information. As a result, the mobile system speeds the process of bringing customer issues and market trends to the attention of the sales managers, which helps BUH compete more effectively.

"With time-sensitive information, the sales managers get an up-to-date view of business accounts that helps optimize decision-making in areas such as pricing and cross-sell/up-sell opportunities," says Pirger. "This is critical, because our competitors often make sudden changes that can affect our sales. Now we can move fast with pricing changes or special offers, and make the decisions that protect our market share."

PDAs bring remote data to integrated solution

BUH solved its sales force communication challenge by implementing a sales force automation (SFA) application based on FusionR SFA from IBM Business Partner R&R Software Rt. and IBM DB2® Universal Database™, with IBM DB2 Everyplace® client software, the version of DB2 that is designed to run on a mobile device.

On the client side, sales representatives use HP, Compaq and iPAQ systems running DB2 Everyplace. Using personal digital assistants (PDAs), 120 sales representatives in the field can now view and store changes on their PDA, eliminating the need for hand-written notes. New data on the PDA is replicated to the corporate server at least once a day, when the sales representatives synchronize their PDAs to the corporate network. Once the data is loaded onto the server, the company's 18 sales managers can access it through DB2 Universal Database, analyzing it using third-party decision-making tools.

The server side of the SFA application is based on IBM WebSphere® Application Server running on IBM @server® xSeries® at company headquarters. WebSphere Application Server provides the runtime environment for the application's J2EE technology-based business logic. DB2 Universal Database manages customer information, such as account history records. The entire implementation took only three months.

Key Components
Software
• IBM WebSphere Application Server
• IBM DB2 Universal Database
• IBM DB2 Everyplace
• FusionR SFA
Servers
• IBM @server xSeries
Business Partner
• R&R Software Rt.

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One of the most valuable components of the SFA application is its integration with the BUH SAP system. Business information collected by the sales representatives in the field is entered automatically into SAP. Since information collected from the e-commerce system is also integrated with SAP, the result is a powerful business management solution that helps BUH maintain a cohesive and informed organization.

IBM: the right solution

Since BUH was already an IBM customer, IBM was the logical choice to provide the mobile information management system for its SFA solution. However, in the interest of due diligence, BUH conducted tests which confirmed that IBM was the right solution. "We tested all major software vendors' applications and our developers recognized that, for massive data processing on the client side for tens of thousands of records, DB2 Everyplace is the only reliable client database solution," notes Pirger.

Open standards were also an important consideration when selecting IBM, as connectivity was central to the application. Explained Gabor lla, e-business unit manager at R&R Software, "Openness is important to us because we develop platform-independent systems. IBM is an ideal partner."

Low-cost application brings far-reaching return

All told, its SFA solution brings BUH the fast communication and timely data access it needs to be more competitive than ever. Sales representatives can maintain excellent relationships with customers, and sales managers can quickly analyze current data to make better decisions. "By automating our data entry process, we've eliminated up to one week of lag time in analyzing sales data," says Pirger. "That means we can analyze customer information four times faster."

In addition to the more efficient business management facilitated by electronic communications, BUH has achieved superior sales force efficiency because sales managers have a better understanding of each account. Specialized features, such as the ability to automatically balance sales force workloads, further increase efficiency. Finally, the integration with back-end e-commerce and SAP systems promote efficient business operations that reduce costs and increase profits.

"With improved efficiencies in both the field and corporate office, we expect BUH to be highly successful in providing fine beer and ale for at least the next 100 years," declares Pirger.

For more information

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