L-3 Communications Security & Detection Systems Case Study

Securing Profitable Customer Relationships with Superior Customer Service

Snapshot

Organization: L-3 Communications Security & Detection Systems

Description: Global service organization for the Security & Detection Systems division of L-3 Communications. Responsible for maintaining security equipment at airports, government and public institutions, Fortune 500 companies, and private facilities worldwide.

Headquarters: Woburn, MA

Challenge: Develop a more proactive and efficient 24x7 customer service organization to manage time-critical activities with optimum resources.

Solution: Invest in CRM technology to provide field technicians an easy way to retrieve service call information, manage inventory, and report on job status in real time.

Result: Measurable improvements to key performance metrics such as response time, call management, resource utilization, and billing cycle length; real-time view of overall operations for service management team.

Antenna Solution: Antenna A^3 for Amdocs ClarifyCRM.

Complementary products: Amdocs ClarifyCRM, Motorola Personal Communicators.

Chances are anyone who has traveled through an airport at one time or another has encountered x-ray equipment from L-3 Security & Detection Systems (L-3), a division of L-3 Communications. Whether it is checking carry-on items at security checkpoints or screening checked bags out-of-sight on airline baggage conveyors, L-3's equipment is running around the clock to help protect passengers in the world's busiest airports.

In addition to airports, L-3 provides security equipment to correctional institutions, government agencies, courthouses, hospitals and schools. To L-3, providing fast and effective service to maintain their equipment in far-flung spots around the globe requires a superior customer service ethic and diligence beyond the norm.

For Ted Alston, L-3's Vice President of Global Customer Support Services, building such a first-rate customer support operation meant creative thinking from his management team. "We've always had the reputation of bending the box," says Alston. "With business growing rapidly after 9/11, we knew we had to look to leading-edge technology to meet the increasing demand of our customer service operations. That's when we found Antenna Software."

ACHIEVING BUSINESS OBJECTIVES THROUGH REAL-TIME MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

Formerly PerkinElmer Detection Systems, a division of PerkinElmer Instruments, L-3 Security & Detection Systems is one of the largest divisions of L-3 Communications. Headquartered in Woburn, Massachusetts, L-3 Security & Detection Systems has three U.S. manufacturing facilities that have produced over 180 different products. 18,000 systems are deployed in various locations throughout the world and maintained by a group of almost 200 field technicians. The technicians report to three regional call centers, which are under the supervision of Ed Olin, L-3's Customer Support Service Manager.

Since L-3 Security & Detection Systems knew they couldn't control the demand of their services, they focused on controlling the supply. That meant better management of their most valuable resource – people. Together Alston and Olin developed a business case that called for an investment in information technology to help them achieve their objectives: Real-time information flow between the field and call centers for more efficient deployment of technical resources and unfailing service to customers.

"The benefits of our approach and the resulting solution are already evident," asserts Olin.

"Our processes are more manageable and measurable 24x7. We can monitor every step a technician takes, from dispatch to resolution."

PUTTING THE SOLUTION TOGETHER

After a comprehensive review, L-3 selected Amdocs ClarifyCRM for their CRM system, specifically the ClearSupport, ClearSales, and ClearLogistics modules. Shortly thereafter, they chose Antenna Software's A^3 for Amdocs ClarifyCRM solution to wirelessly extend Clarify to the field. "The number one reason we chose the Antenna A^3 solution was because of the relationship. You can't find a better business partner than Antenna," says Alston. Olin concurs adding, "Our business is based on solid and productive relationships and we didn't want a third-party consultant to complicate that."

Before Antenna, L-3 used a simple paging system and relied heavily on the telephone. They still use the telephone to make one call when dispatching a technician, only because L-3 believes in maintaining a personal touch between the call center and the technicians out in the field. But after that, everyone can retrieve all the information they need from the system, either via Clarify's Web interface in the call center or the Antenna A^3 application on the wireless device.

Antenna A^3 for Clarify is a full-featured wireless application that seamlessly integrates into the back-end Clarify system, preserving existing business rules and data structures. With an intuitively designed user interface, A^3 for Clarify enables field technicians to perform their tasks with ease and record information related to the status of their service calls from start to finish. For example, technicians can open, close and update the status of any job, enter time and expenses, check inventory, retrieve pertinent customer account information – all in real time. Likewise, the call center can input critical updates to a service call, which triggers an automatic alert on the technician's device.

"We evaluated other wireless solutions, but no one offered a robust application with store-and-forward capabilities like Antenna A^3," says Olin. Store-and-forward technology enables technicians to work on the device, whether or not they are within network coverage. This is also known as "always-on" technology. "Without store-and-forward, you do not have a full solution," he posits.

Currently, L-3 field technicians carry Motorola Personal Communicators that operate on the ReFLEX network, but L-3 is planning a transition to BlackBerry wireless handhelds on Nextel in the near future because of their phone capability and ease of use. "Antenna's solution is flexible

enough to accommodate changes to our wireless device hardware as our needs evolve and the market changes," states Olin.

WHEN TIME IS CRITICAL

L-3 is a customer-focused enterprise and, as such, works hard to cultivate those relationships. Prior to L-3's real-time mobile field service solution, customers would place a service request and simply wait for verbal confirmation. Now with Antenna A^3, L-3 keeps them informed every step of the way. "Any delay in service can cost our customers thousands of dollars, and it can cost us the contract if key performance indicators and entitlements are not met," says Olin.

As per L-3's business rules, every time a technician updates a case via Antenna A^3, the customer receives an e-mail notification advising that the technician is en route or delayed or whatever the situation may be. Olin explains, "We keep our customers informed and in the loop and this enables them to report back to their management easily. Technology can't do everything but it is helping us meet more customer objectives and manage the negative impact of service, if necessary."

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Since the Antenna solution has been operating at L-3, they have processed nearly 20,000 service requests

through the system. In fact, business has grown 70% over the past year and Antenna A^3 has totally scaled to meet the increased demand.

One of the primary objectives of L-3's CRM and wireless implementation was to have the capability to measure their performance against key indicators. So far, the results have been positive. The time to manage a call has been reduced by 60% using Antenna A^3, a gauge of overall efficiency and productivity. "We can dispatch the right person to the job and make sure they are there at the right time," says Olin. "Having all cases being updated in real time gives us an on-going review of the entire operation. We can shift resources to where they are needed most and manage caseloads with more accuracy, which has reduced costs significantly."

Another important measurement of success for L-3 is an enormous decrease in day sales outstanding. When a service call is closed out, the field technician updates the case using his wireless device and prints a receipt on the spot using a Seiko Instruments printer. The update triggers an e-mail to be sent to the billing department, who then process the invoice. This has resulted in faster turnaround to sales accounting, much shorter billing cycles, and improved cash flow because of more timely accounting procedures.

Inventory management has also seen improvement. Before Antenna, decrements to stock were done on paper and took time to be reflected in the system. Now management and the field technicians get an up-to-date view of trunk inventory at all times. When a part is used, the transaction is entered in the system and posted to the General Ledger in near real time. Just as important, the technician can now request a part while on site, check back on the status of the part shipment, and retrieve all relevant details, including the shipper's tracking number.

SHARING THE BENEFITS

"One of the most important things I've learned is that you have to have business processes in place to manage the technology, otherwise it will end up managing you," states Olin. He takes this credo to heart in all aspects of his job. For example, Olin and the service management team routinely provide data trends to Product Engineering for analysis. They also run operational reports, which are distributed to Sales, Marketing and sometimes even the customer.

In addition, Olin periodically organizes comprehensive training sessions for the technicians, not only so they can learn how to input data, but also so they understand *why* they are doing it. "Our technicians realize that by doing their job right, they are an integral part of the process of exceeding customer expectations," he says. "They really make a difference."

Keeping customers informed and satisfied is a core objective for Customer Support Services, evident in the smallest detail of L-3's service processes. For example, every receipt that is printed on site contains a URL where the customer can visit after the service call to complete an online survey. "The survey is a great way to close the loop between the technician, the call center and the customer. It helps us to continually see where we can improve," says Olin.

Ted Alston clearly understands the value that his service organization provides to the company and has proven it to L-3's executive leadership team. "Service is absolutely a differentiator in today's marketplace," he says. "Antenna A^3 for Clarify is helping L-3 to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage by delivering superior customer service in every corner of the world at any time, day or night. No one else can offer that."