



Microsoft Dynamics Customer Solution Case Study



CRM Solution Helps Growing Data Storage Provider Meet Its Information Needs

Overview

Country: United States

Industry: Information Technology

Customer Profile

Compellent Technologies was founded in March 2002 to deliver affordable, integrated network storage solutions. Headquartered in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, Compellent has approximately 60 employees.

Business Situation

Compellent sought a cost-effective, scalable IT infrastructure that could automate the way its business partner network interacted and communicated with the company's sales, order, and support processes and personnel.

Solution

Compellent deployed Microsoft® CRM and other Microsoft technologies to gain powerful insights into its business and provide business-building information to its reseller partners.

Benefits

- Increased information for business partners
- Rapid technology adoption
- Additional business insights
- Scalability

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Dennis Johnson, Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Compellent Technologies

Many growing companies are seeking better ways to share information with employees and sales professionals and develop additional insights into their business.

Compellent Technologies, an Eden Prairie, Minnesota-based provider of data storage solutions, is no exception. The company sought a complete IT infrastructure that could help it compete effectively in a fast-growing, competitive marketplace by providing outstanding service and support to its business partners and offering additional decision-driving information.

By implementing Microsoft® CRM—which is integrated with the company's Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains® (both now part of Microsoft Dynamics™) back-office solution—and a host of other Microsoft technologies, Compellent is realizing all those benefits and has positioned itself for a bright future.



Situation

Compellent Technologies is something of a trailblazer in the data storage industry. While other companies market their products through a direct sales force, Compellent sells exclusively through a group of reseller partners. And while competitors build the storage systems they believe their customers want, Compellent works closely with its customers to identify their requirements and build the right storage solutions for their needs.

So, when designing and implementing a complete IT solution, Compellent again bucked the trend. The company designed and built its IT infrastructure—including a customer relationship management (CRM) solution—before even taking its first sales order.

Founded in 2002, Compellent is a relative newcomer in the highly competitive data storage industry. Nevertheless, the company has plans to become a major player in the field. “Most of the products in the marketplace over the last couple of years have been very expensive, very hardware-proprietary focused, and not very scalable or affordable. Plus, they’ve been terribly complicated to administer,” says Michael Beach, Director of Sales Operations for Compellent Technologies.

Compellent built the company and its suite of products around addressing those fundamental data-storage issues. “You don’t have to be 3M or GM to afford our solution—and you don’t have to be Albert Einstein to use it,” Beach says. “We’ve turned data storage into something that is affordable at the entry level and will grow with you if you do become the next General Motors.”

Compellent is unique in the industry in the way in which it goes to market with its products. The company eschews a direct-

sales force, opting instead for a tight network of indirect-channel business partners. Some of Compellent’s 25 partners are software developers who combine Compellent’s products with their own to create a bundled system. Others are storage experts who sell both Compellent’s and competing storage products.

Early on, Compellent recognized that a CRM system would be critical to providing outstanding service and support to its business partners. “We needed to be able to blow our business partners away with the ease of doing business with us,” Beach explains. “They can buy storage products from any number of companies. If we can make the process easier, faster, more fun, and more profitable for them to sell and support our product, we feel that will enhance our success.”

As a result, Compellent built CRM directly into its business model. “We invested in CRM upfront as an enabler of our rapid growth,” Beach says. “A lot of companies wait to put in a CRM system until they’ve been in business for three or four years. We put ours in place before we booked our first order.”

Solution

Compellent set a number of criteria for its ideal CRM solution:

- **Cost effectiveness**—Because Compellent was, at the time, a startup company using venture capital financing, the solution had to make financial sense.
- **Scalability**—“We absolutely have plans to become a significant player in this industry in the next few years,” Beach says. As a result, Compellent’s CRM solution had to accommodate the company’s current employees and business partners—and be able to meet the needs of additional employees and partners as Compellent grows.

“With Microsoft CRM, we have the ability to collaborate on every potential deal our business partner community is working to close into the future.”

Michael Beach, Director of Sales Operations,
Compellent Technologies

- Integration with other technologies—Compellent wanted a CRM solution that would integrate with its Microsoft® Business Solutions—Great Plains® back-office solution, which would enable data-sharing across the enterprise. “We wanted to be using one database, one set of tools, and have the ability to share data from Microsoft Great Plains to Microsoft CRM and vice versa,” Beach says.
- Safety—Finally, Compellent sought high-quality business partners—ones that would be around for the long term. “We wanted to do business with partners who had unique expertise they could bring to our business,” Beach says.

Compellent evaluated a number of popular CRM solutions. “We looked at a solution from one of the major players, but it wasn’t cost effective at the entry point,” Beach says.

The company also looked at a hosted CRM solution. “That one just didn’t make sense for us because, with our indirect sales-channel model, we wanted to ensure that our partners’ confidential information was hosted on servers within our company,” Beach says.

For Compellent, Microsoft Business Solutions CRM was the right choice. “When we looked at Microsoft CRM, we saw a product that offered us the opportunity to integrate with our accounting and manufacturing packages so we could truly share information throughout the enterprise,” says Dennis Johnson, Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Compellent Technologies. “The whole thing works as a coordinated set of applications.”

In addition, Compellent saw Microsoft as a stable, secure software provider. “If you’ve got to bet your business on something, Microsoft’s a pretty good bet,” Beach says. “Plus, as good as the software is now, it will be even better in three or four years.”

Compellent worked with three business partners to build its back-office infrastructure. Olsen Thielen Technologies, a Microsoft Gold Certified Business Solutions Partner based in St. Paul, Minnesota, deployed Compellent’s Microsoft Great Plains back-office and Microsoft Great Plains Manufacturing Series modules.

Zamba Solutions, based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, helped design and implement Compellent’s workflow processes.

Finally, Axonom, a Microsoft Certified Business Solutions Provider based in Bloomington, Minnesota, implemented Compellent’s Microsoft CRM solution. In conjunction with it, Axonom also deployed its own software, PowerTrak, an independent software vendor (ISV) solution that sits atop Microsoft CRM and extends its capabilities to create a powerful and flexible Internet portal.

The secure portal is the primary way Compellent and its partners share business information. “Virtually every tool that a business partner would need to build a successful storage practice is available via the portal,” says Scott Horst, Compellent’s Director of Marketing.

In fact, the portal is the cornerstone of Compellent’s indirect-channel sales efforts. “We made a strategic decision as a business to sell exclusively through the channel,” Horst says. “So what we’ve done is put everything our business partners could conceivably need right onto the portal so it’s always there for them.”

The portal includes such information as the following:

- Training materials
- Product-demonstration materials
- Training calendar

Storage Center, from Compellent Technologies, is the first modular storage area network (SAN) that integrates enterprise-level capabilities into a single, comprehensive, and affordable solution. Storage Center enables businesses to reduce storage expenditures, quickly recover from data hazards, scale across any technology, and easily manage storage without adding staff.



- Certification status for sales and technical staff
- Forecasting and deal-registration capabilities
- Configuration tools
- Monthly forecasting tools
- Delivery date status
- Sales collateral
- Business forms
- Transaction status reports

Even with three technology partners involved, implementation of the complete Microsoft stack of technologies went relatively smoothly—and rapidly. “We set an aggressive schedule for this implementation,” Beach says. In fact, the entire system was deployed in just 130 days, “and that was for Microsoft Great Plains, Microsoft CRM, the Manufacturing module, and customization of our partner portal to mirror the look and feel of our Web site,” Beach notes.

Compellent is pleased with the performance of Microsoft CRM—and excited about the promise it holds. “The whole system is already working beyond our expectations,” Beach says. Nevertheless, he says, “We think the promised land is still to be reached. Microsoft is just going to keep adding functionality and more bulletproof performance to it.”

Benefits

In addition to being able to more easily share information across the enterprise, Compellent is realizing a wealth of other benefits from its Microsoft system.

Valuable Information for Business Partners

The combination of Microsoft CRM and PowerTrak is helping Compellent provide the tools and information its reseller partners need for increased business success. “The feedback we’ve received from our business partners about doing business with us via our

online portal has been overwhelmingly positive,” Beach says. “They like the simplicity of being able to do business on their terms—and the ability to have the tools they need, when they need them.”

Rapid Technology Adoption

By deploying Microsoft CRM early in the company’s development cycle, Compellent and its business partners are benefiting from quick and early adoption of the new solution. “We wanted to avoid a situation where we introduced a new, automated tool and then encountered resistance from users,” Beach explains. “So, we built the automation into it in year one, taught everyone to use the system, and made sure the system was an enabler, not an obstacle.”

Ability to Grow with the Company

By deploying Microsoft CRM and other Microsoft technologies, Compellent believes it has an IT infrastructure that can easily accommodate the company’s growth. “We’re going to be able to scale much more quickly in years ahead than we would have if we hadn’t put in the CRM system now,” Beach says. “By making the investment now, we’re going to get a tremendous return for many years to come.”

Additional Insights into the Business

With Microsoft CRM, Compellent enjoys complete visibility into its business—especially its sales activities. “With Microsoft CRM, we have the ability to collaborate on every potential deal our business partner community is working to close out into the future,” Beach says. As a result, Compellent benefits from being able to build precise revenue and manufacturing forecasts.

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about Axonom products and services, call 888-814-2880 or visit the Web site at: www.axonom.com

For more information about Compellent Technologies products and services, call 952-294-3300 or visit the Web site at: www.compellent.com

Microsoft Dynamics

Microsoft Dynamics is a line of integrated, adaptable business management solutions that enables you and your people to make business decisions with greater confidence. Microsoft Dynamics works like familiar Microsoft software such as Microsoft Office, which means less of a learning curve for your people, so they can get up and running quickly and focus on what's most important. And because it is from Microsoft, it easily works with the systems that your company already has implemented. By automating and streamlining financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes, Microsoft Dynamics brings together people, processes, and technologies, increasing the productivity and effectiveness of your business, and helping you drive business success.

For more information about Microsoft Dynamics, go to: www.microsoft.com/dynamics



Software and Services

- Microsoft Office 2003 Professional
- Microsoft Office Outlook 2003
- Microsoft BizTalk Server 2002
- Microsoft Exchange 2000 Server
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Microsoft Windows XP Professional
- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Business Solutions for Manufacturing
 - Microsoft CRM
 - Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains

Partners

- Axonom
- Zamba Solutions
- Olsen Thielen Technologies

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