

"CustomerVision allows us to distribute time sensitive information as well as facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of information so that everyone can both share and benefit from our own intellectual capital."

-Tim Plimmer,
Senior VP of
Operations,
CDS-Global

Company Profile

Company Name: CDS Global, a Hearst Company Corporation. (www.cds-global.com)

Primary industry: Publishing Services

Size of Company: 3,000 Employees

Corporate Headquarters: Des Moines, IA

CDS, which provides fulfillment and data management services to publishers including Conde Nast, Meredith, Rodale, Reader's Digest and National Geographic Books, has used CustomerVision since December 2005. The company, which operates 240 customer care sites for its different clients, has roughly 25 million subscriber names in its databases.

The company's corporate offices are located in Des Moines, Iowa, with branch-site locations in: Boone, Harlan, Red Oak, Tipton and Wilton, Iowa; Bethlehem, Pa., and Prescott, Ariz. Additionally, CDS maintains an office in New York City and has fulfillment affiliates in Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

CDS is a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Hearst Corporation and employs 3,000 people worldwide.

The Hearst Corporation is one of the nation's largest diversified communications companies, with interests in: magazines; newspapers; books and business publishing; television and radio stations; newspaper comics and features syndication; cable television networks; television production and syndication; and new media activities

Information Resources Weren't Current or Complete

As a leader in the magazine fulfillment industry with almost 3000 employees in offices across the United States, CDS was faced with a number of content management and knowledge sharing challenges. The first challenge was improving methods for creating and sharing web-based information. Their previous technologies employed a traditional repository model for finding, sharing and delivering information, which was inefficient and didn't handle just in time information needs.

CDS was looking for a solution to help its employees share relevant information in a more efficient manner. CDS was particularly interested in improving the distribution of internal information. In addition, CDS was interested in finding methods to "front end" access to data living in disparate

databases and information silos, such as Lotus Notes.

"Our business is really highly information-driven," said Tim Plimmer, CDS' Senior Vice President of Operations. With operating centers in locations spanning Bethlehem, Pa., to Prescott, Ariz., as well as six Iowa centers, "we were always looking for better ways to populate pertinent information about clients and services we perform and the nuances of their businesses and be able to distribute that across multiple enterprises," he said.

"Most operators know the policies, but the more intricate ones, or ones that just came up - like if editorial content is causing a stir - the team gets a message that there's specific content for this. 'Tell the reader this' or 'Send it to editorial,'" says Plimmer. "We're trying to take information that's in many people's minds or may be in manuals and create a knowledge information wiki repository that is dynamic and ever changing to meet our business needs."

CustomerVision Delivers a Solution

Plimmer determined that delivering information to employees via an Enterprise Wiki would be a huge improvement over the existing data repository methods. "It's very easy to create, search for, edit and read wiki pages," he noted. In the evaluation process ease of administration was identified as another essential requirement. The solution chosen had to be easy to administer across the entire enterprise.

Plimmer chose CustomerVision to handle the firm's knowledge sharing needs. The deployment began with the firm's Customer Service, Training and Marketing departments and has quickly expanded to the rest of the company. The installation and implementation was straightforward and easy, with core functionality working immediately and users were able to learn the product without training. According to Plimmer, "CustomerVision's support team was very knowledgeable and professional. They responded immediately when we had questions and resolved all our issues."

With CustomerVision's assistance, CDS in Des Moines implemented an internal wiki application in less than 30 days, which it calls "AskCDS," in December of 2005. The world's largest magazine subscription fulfillment company, CDS services approximately 335 magazine titles and 25 direct-marketing companies.

AskCDS is available to 1,800 employees in CDS operations - call centers, mail processing, image scanning, e-mail customer service - at its 10 U.S. sites as well as those in Canada, England and Australia. They use AskCDS to inform their employees of the different protocols each publisher has for handling subscriber inquiries and for various internal forms that need to be accessed across departments, training materials, internal trends pages and various request forms.

Why CustomerVision?

CDS's initial evaluation began with a variety of potential knowledge sharing solutions. After evaluating several potential solutions Plimmer realized CustomerVision had a number of advantages over competing solutions. CustomerVision is a hosted solution so it requires no desktop deployment, because of its ease of use it requires no training, and new content is generated without changing employees' daily jobs. "We have offices nationwide and almost 3000 potential users. Complex products which require a manual install are becoming harder to justify as an enterprise solution due to the cost of the installation and training and support," he noted. With CustomerVision, CDS came across a hosted solution that didn't require extensive training or any installation requirements.

CustomerVision is easy for administrators to create and manage groups and access levels from a centralized location. The CustomerVision administrator assigns users to groups and then can assign specific pages to these groups. This results in these groups receiving just the information they need to see. CustomerVision's centralized user group/level assignment functionality gives CDS the ability to assign relevant sections to unique business units within the firm (e.g. Marketing Department, Customer Service, Training, etc.) with no time required from its IT staff.

The system is easy to use and makes information more readily available than it was previously with the Lotus Notes databases the company uses, Plimmer says. "Employees knew information was somewhere but now they can get to it by doing a Search and get a response in a matter of seconds. Additionally, with the Ask the Expert function, AskCDS can help when an employee can't find the answer to a question they may not know who the expert is for a particular system but within minutes a question is routed through CustomerVision to a CDS knowledge expert who answers the question." Plimmer says. "It wouldn't be something you can just look on the software vendor's site to see how it's run" because the company writes most of its own systems."

After using it internally for three years among its operational employees,

"we're impressed with the software," Plimmer said. "It's doing what they said it would do and it's filling a need we have for distribution and collaboration of information that's critical to operating our business." The knowledge base has become critical in assuring cross channel consistency as well as timely distribution of constantly changing information.

The Future

CDS is so happy with CustomerVision that it plans to extend its use to its client service department to interact with publishers. CDS also plans to run a pilot program with the software in the next six months for a new type of communication between a magazine and its readers.

Plimmer imagines that a niche publisher or marketer, say a gardening or cooking magazine, would include the Ask the Expert function on the Frequently Asked Questions page of its Web site where readers could inquire about planting azaleas in the shade, for instance. "So if one of our clients that publish gardening magazines has a reader with a question about lilies and can't find it on their Web site, they can post this question," Plimmer said. "The software will then route it based on subject matter experts, who will then respond back to the consumer. If that's a highly asked question, it would (move) up to the top, so when you went to the FAQs that would be one of the first things you would see."

"Our thinking is that it's another opportunity for our clients to brand their products with their customers and make them a source for information that their subscribers will come back to," Plimmer says. "In the publishing industry, renewals are king and you want to provide that value."

CDS is currently rolling out AskCDS to clients in order to provide self-serve opportunities for the clients while at the same time reducing call volume internally.

"The software's interactive Web capabilities may provide added revenue streams for CDS's clients, or at the very least better position them as customer-service-driven companies that will stick out in customers' minds when the time comes to renew their magazine subscriptions," Plimmer said.

The Return on Investment

- CDS feels that their work has changed tremendously due to AskCDS. They have averted increased talk time as a result of real time access to information on more complicated calls.

The Return on Investment con't

- CDS feels they have experienced call time reduction. Current statistics: 3 million emails per year and 9.2M phone calls, so if we dropped 25% average contact time by 30 seconds, at a \$1/contact savings = \$3.05M.
- Managed to reduce the 'increases' caused with new clients now that clients have self-serve access to the information.
- Reported a decrease in on-boarding new employees in the training process.