Providing 50,000 Customers with Faster Service Resolution

Cinergy Communications Company (CCC) began operations as a full-service telecommunications provider in May 2001, after the merger of five companies from Indiana and Kentucky. The Evansville, Indiana-based competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC) offers local telephone service, long distance, Internet access/solutions, and web hosting services to meet the needs of nearly 300,000 customers and more than 20,000 homes throughout Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, and Illinois.

The company has rapidly grown its customer base for all of its telecommunications and Internet solutions, and, as expected, the number of customer service and support requests has also grown. Cinergy Communications recently determined that it needed a flexible, customizable service desk solution to match the demand – one that could be leveraged over multiple areas of the company.

In particular, the company was looking for a web-based solution to centrally control and manage its customer service and support requests, in the form of trouble tickets, as well as those requests associated with its network operations. Cinergy Communications also needed the system to support its workflow processes to resolve certain types of technical issues that span across multiple departments.

The Challenge

With a customer base fast approaching 50,000, CCC's 20 agent support team processes nearly 3,000 trouble tickets every month. According to Pat Heck, Chief Technology Officer at Cinergy Communications, "We not only needed to centrally track and manage trouble tickets for our customers using various products, we also needed to track and manage network-related issues in real-time." According to Mr. Heck, approximately 95% of Cinergy Communications' trouble tickets received each day are customer-specific, with the remainder pertaining to internal network issues, such as technical problems associated with a malfunctioning node or switch.

IN BRIEF

Industry
Telecommunications

Challenge
- Deploy an easy-to-use, highly customized, and centralized repository to track all types of customer trouble tickets across multiple departments

Solutions
- Numara FootPrints

Business Application
- Customer service automation to centrally track all customer queries and network issues across multiple products, platforms and departments, and to generate trouble tickets
- Request tracking for IT network operations
- Integration with billing and customer database systems

Key Features
- Centralized management of all incoming trouble tickets
- Inter-departmental workflow automation
- Easy customization without programming
- Flexibility for multiple projects and departments

Benefits
- Initial cost savings of up to $50,000
- 100% web-based solution provided ease-of-access throughout the organization
- Improved flow of trouble tickets between multiple departments
- Shortened resolution time to solve customer complaints

Before selecting a web-based service desk solution to manage trouble tickets, Cinergy Communications used a Visual Basic®-based system that was developed in-house. This system ultimately failed to support the company's rapid growth, the volume of customer service requirements, and advanced workflow processes. "Once we were opening more than 20 tickets per day, it became quite cumbersome," said Mr. Heck. "It was a growth issue and the incumbent product just didn't lend itself to the workflow of having a ticket move automatically between multiple departments. Also, it did not allow us to accurately track the ticket effectively. As we continued to grow, we realized that we required this missing functionality."

The Choice

During CCC's solution search, the company considered Action Request System® from Remedy® Software, but determined its price was too high. Ultimately, Cinergy Communications chose to implement Numara FootPrints from Numara Software because of its attractive price point, flexibility, and versatility. Also, according to Mr. Heck, "We selected FootPrints because it allows us to do things we were not able to do in the past, such as centrally manage all trouble tickets and streamline workflow. This translated into improved employee productivity, quicker issue resolution, and a better overall experience for the customer."

"Initially, it's easy to say that FootPrints saved us approximately $50,000," said Mr. Heck. "But beyond its' affordability, we liked the fact that FootPrints is 100% web-based and that it is coded in Perl, which gives us the browser-based flexibility without compromising functionality. Even two years later, we can look back and not regret our decision to go with FootPrints and, as a result, we continue to utilize the system for additional projects."

The Solution

Cinergy Communications deployed Numara FootPrints on a Linux® platform and linked the solution to their existing Oracle® database. They use the solution to manage customer service and network-management workflow processes across multiple departments. The system is customized with fields and drop-down menus, such as a tab named "responsible organizations". Internal departments, including the repair center and translations department, are built-in as options within the tab. Cinergy Communications established a queue within Numara FootPrints that will sort and assign tickets based on each responsible organization. The company defines roles of each organization and assigns users to those roles.

"We can have a ticket flow between multiple departments in a relatively short time and use the escalation capabilities within FootPrints at my disposal," Mr. Heck said. "For instance, based on a ticket's original status, when entered, I can send it to another department, and automatically assign it a pre-determined status based on our internal business practices."

"I would say that Cinergy Communications just might be one of FootPrints 's most unique users, because of how we also integrated it with our network alarm system," Mr. Heck said. Although not typically required, Cinergy Communications elected to customize Numara FootPrints to accomplish its business-specific needs. "It is linked to our 24/7 network surveillance center, so when a network alarm comes in for a particular piece of equipment, such as a malfunctioning node, a ticket is dynamically generated and auto-routed to appropriate personnel."

Numara FootPrints is also integrated with Cinergy Communications' billing and customer databases systems, so agents can dynamically pull and open tickets based on a telephone number, circuit ID, or an account ID from a customer. "There are all kinds of push and pulls that we have built into our current system through FootPrints ," Mr. Heck said. A "one-touch-click" from the company's billing system creates a new ticket in Numara FootPrints with all pertinent information included from the billing age. When a customer calls the customer service department, agents can see what telecom service the customer has and, if the problem is not obvious, can create a trouble ticket. With a single click they can open a ticket, based on the customer's particular product or service, and auto-route it to the appropriate area within the repair center.

The centralization of all trouble tickets, customer problems, and documentation into a single repository is the key benefit of Numara FootPrints in Mr. Heck's view. "The workflow is extremely powerful, and being able to attach and send tickets from department to department is extremely helpful," he said. "With FootPrints , we can get tickets resolved and closed very quickly, which translates to a better overall service experience to the customer."

The Results

It has been two years since Cinergy Communications deployed Numara FootPrints. In that time, the company has logged nearly a hundred thousand service requests, more than surpassing its need to track trouble tickets across various products and platforms while tracking them. Even though cost was an important consideration in choosing Numara FootPrints over the competition, ultimately Numara FootPrints 's flexibility is what allowed Cinergy Communications to adapt the software to accommodate its specific workflow considerations. Numara FootPrints also saved Cinergy Communications approximately $50,000 up front.

Numara FootPrints also helped Cinergy Communications reduce incident-handling costs, increase level-one call resolution, and automate workflow to accommodate growth and increase efficiency.

Cinergy Communications took Numara FootPrints to new levels of functionality as one of Numara Software's earliest users of the product in an industrial-strength, external customer service capacity. And in doing so, Cinergy Communications has been able to accomplish greater customer service automation, workflow, and centralization, and has been able to provide a consistently positive customer experience to its nearly 50,000 customers.

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Pat Heck
Chief Technology Officer
Cinergy Communications

"Numara FootPrints has been well received by the agents. It's definitely exceeded their expectations. They are always giving me suggestions on new fields to add to make the process go even smoother."

John Haverty
Manager of Technology Support
Washburn University

Who are we?

Numara Software is a leading provider of integrated IT management solutions for Desktop Management, PC Lifecycle Management, Security & Compliance, Help Desk and Service Desk. Designed to optimize IT management, Numara FootPrints and Numara Track-It! collectively support more than 50,000 customer sites and nearly 20 million IT assets worldwide.

freedom to simply **choose** the right solution for you