

A voice and data services provider creates a platform for innovation

IBM WebSphere software helps improve responsiveness to marketplace changes

The need

This voice and data services provider strives to improve the service it offers its customers while enhancing efficiency, cutting costs and empowering its employees with the latest technology.

The solution

Teaming with IBM, the company created a mobile application platform that would help enable it to respond quickly to meet its customers' needs while supporting growing volumes of data.

The benefit

The company reduced time to market for new mobile applications, cut call center costs and improved its customer satisfaction levels.

Headquartered in the United States, this voice and data services provider employs approximately 80,000 people. A leader in wireless voice and data services, the company offers global voice and data services in more than 200 destinations around the world.

Staying ahead in a fast-paced industry

The communications industry is constantly changing. To stay ahead, the company strives to improve the service it offers its customers while enhancing efficiency, cutting costs and empowering its employees with the latest technology. In 2000, the company began providing self-service options to help better serve its customers. When smartphones became popular, the company created a rich client application for the Android and Apple iOS platforms. However, it can be challenging to stay on top of changing technologies and evolving customer needs. For example, the Apple iOS platform is updated every year, but the Android operating system is updated every quarter, so the company must update its application correspondingly. The company must also be able to accommodate growing numbers of customer self-service transactions and increasing amounts of data.



*IBM is a great partner
for us and we use
IBM products, IBM tools
wherever it's applicable.*

—IT director, voice and data services provider

In addition to delivering excellent service to its customers, the company seeks to empower its employees by enabling them to work on the device of their choice. To meet these needs, it created a mobile application platform solution. According to an IT director at the company, cultivating the ability to keep up with change is essential to stay ahead in today's marketplace. "If we are not ready to face the change, if we are not ready to adopt, then there is no place for you in this dynamically changing world," he says.

Building a platform to reduce time to market

Teaming with IBM, the company created a mobile application platform that would help enable it to respond quickly to meet its customers' needs while supporting growing volumes of data. "IBM is a great partner for us and we use IBM products, IBM tools wherever it's applicable," says the IT director. The mobile application platform consists of three primary components: consumer applications, including an application, for self-service; commerce applications, such as a mobile accessory store that enables customers to purchase accessories from their mobile devices; and enterprise mobility, to empower its employees to work from the device and location of their choice.

The provider uses an IBM® WebSphere® DataPower® Integration Appliance X150 to filter network traffic based on business rules and to parse and route Extensible Markup Language (XML) messages. The appliance also helps provide network security. "You can define rules and you can filter certain requests, and you can use it as a security gateway," says the IT director. "It's reliable, it's easy to use and maintain, and it's continuously evolving to meet our next-generation needs."

Solution components

Software

- IBM® WebSphere® Application Server
 - IBM WebSphere eXtreme Scale
 - IBM WebSphere DataPower® Integration Appliance X150
 - IBM WebSphere Message Broker
 - IBM WebSphere MQ
 - IBM Rational® Application Developer
 - IBM Rational AppScan®
 - IBM Rational ClearCase®
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Using IBM software, the company created a hybrid enterprise service bus (ESB) solution. IBM WebSphere Message Broker software is the core of the ESB, integrating several packaged and custom applications within the enterprise. The WebSphere DataPower Integration Appliance X150 extends the ESB beyond the enterprise, providing a gateway through the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and off-loading XML processing and preprocessing to the WebSphere DataPower Integration Appliance X150 XML processing engine. IBM WebSphere MQ software offers delivery that is designed for reliability among enterprise applications, which run on a range of platforms. The company uses IBM WebSphere eXtreme Scale software to help enable scaling to handle increased volumes of transactions. In addition, the company implemented IBM WebSphere Application Server software to serve the platform for all mobile application development, and IBM Rational® Application Developer, IBM Rational AppScan® and IBM Rational ClearCase® software to support development.

Simplifying development and supporting growth

Using the mobile application platform, the provider re-created its application using hybrid HTML5, enabling it to create a common framework for multiple operating systems, including iOS, Android, Windows Mobile and Research in Motion (RIM). “For companies, it is challenging to adapt for the constantly changing world,” says the IT director. “We made it as a cultural change. In other words, when you create the ecosystem that really helps each other, when you create five applications with a solid framework and solid foundation, then responding to the needs of the customers is not as difficult as it seems to the outside world. It’s still a challenging exercise and requires continuous improvement over a period of time, but we love it; it provides new opportunities for us.”

The new platform helped enable the company to accommodate growing numbers of transactions. For example, when the company launched the mobile application in 2003, it processed approximately 20,000 transactions per day. Today, the company processes four million per day. “That is the kind of growth we are talking about in almost every single aspect of the mobile industry,” says the IT director. “It did not happen overnight, but it grew rapidly. So we set up our systems in the data centers, multisite data centers and failover redundancy systems, and we’re always planning for twice the capacity in advance and continuously revisiting and improving.”

Improving satisfaction levels for customers and employees

Ultimately, the new platform helped the company improve the service it offers its customers. For example, the company’s commerce application captured up to 10 percent of the market online within the company in the first four months of its launch. And it has received great reviews and ratings from customers. By creating successful mobile applications and services, the company is able to reduce costs at its call centers by decreasing the numbers of incoming calls. Instead of having to call customer service, customers can access information about their accounts or purchase accessories for their devices from just about anywhere. “So we think that call deflection is beneficial for the company in the name of cost savings, but surprisingly, we have also found that the customers love it,” says the IT director. “It improves customer satisfaction.” The company is reinvesting the revenue it saves through call reduction to increase the coverage of its fourth-generation long-term evolution (4G LTE) network, improve its third-generation (3G) network and expand its employee training programs to further improve customer service.

The platform also helped enable the provider to create 20 mobile applications that approximately 330,000 employees use. The platform significantly reduced the company's time to market, allowing it to create e-commerce applications in just four weeks. "We are able to meet the challenges set by our executives and not only deliver a product; it is the best-in-class product," says the IT director. "That is the kind of confidence we have."

For more information

To learn more about IBM WebSphere software, please contact your IBM marketing representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/websphere

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