



CASE STUDY

Orchard Brands Improves Customer Experience



Industry

Retail

Challenge

Improve usability of order entry application to accommodate seasonal employees during peak ordering times

Results

- Reduced seasonal employee attrition
- Eliminated 50 seconds from the order processing time
- Cut training time by eight hours for new and seasonal employees
- Improved the accuracy of first-time orders

Products

- Rocket® LegaSuite Web

Application

- Retail Call Center

Company

Headquartered in Middleton, Massachusetts, Orchard Brands is a direct-to-consumer retailer of name brand and private label merchandise with a portfolio of 11 consumer lines serving the boomer and senior demographic, generally considered age 50 and over. Orchard Brands include Blair, Tog Shop, and Appleseed's, among other enduring names. Orchard Brands sells apparel, accessories, shoes, and home, garden, and health products through its catalogs and e-commerce sites.

Challenge

Orchard Brands is an IBM® i shop, powering its IT systems and operations around three AS/400s located in data centers in the northeastern United States. The IBM i systems host picking/shipping, financial operations, and the Oracle CommercialWare order processing application, among other critical business processes. The target persona for the call center is a woman over 50 years of age who prefers to place orders by phone and speak to a human rather than purchase merchandise online. To fully meet the needs of this persona, the call center starts hiring temporary telephone employees in August to support seasonal surges in business over the holidays. During these peak call-in times, the number of call service representatives (CSRs) increases from 500 to 1000. Training for these seasonal hires is critical. Orchard Brands estimates it takes approximately three weeks to get a temporary CSR proficient in answering the phone and processing orders.

Early in 2014, Orchard Brands' call center looked for new efficiencies in its order process, including improving its cross-sell metrics. The call center also hoped to streamline the training of both new and seasonal hires. While permanent employees were accustomed to the green screens fronting the order application, new temporary employees had issues with usability and some were ultimately dropping out of training sessions before completion. The CEO of the company visited the call center to understand and isolate some of the issues, and ended up putting on a headset and personally attempting to process orders. During one of the CEO's first attempts to take an order, he was forced to "abort" and quickly determined that the company's legacy green screens were a large part of the inefficiency in processing orders. "Fix it," was the CEO's immediate mandate.

Solution

To improve the overall usability of the order processing system, Orchard Brands turned to Rocket Software and Rocket® LegaSuite Web to assist with its improvement efforts. The IT



team made clear that the project spanned several objectives. While the Rocket team could significantly reduce the time required to train the new CSRs by minimizing the number of screens required, it was also imperative that Rocket decrease the time to process orders. Average handle time (AHT) is a critical metric used to assess and measure efficiency for any call center. However, it can be challenging to reduce this metric while maintaining customer satisfaction. According to the call center, “Hurrying customers off the phone can impact other call center KPIs such as first call resolution, and increase the number of escalated calls to management. We recognized the best way to attack AHT was with better training and a streamlined agent workflow and processes.”

Long-term employees who were used to the green screens were very comfortable using them to process orders, so Rocket had to do more than reduce training time for new employees: the new Rocket GUI also had to reduce order processing time in comparison to the old green screen times. The call center established a benchmark of reducing 12 seconds from the overall order process over and above green screens as the key metric for the project’s success. Orchard Brands evaluated several different solutions, but ultimately selected Rocket because the team focused on addressing the call center’s business needs rather than on the solution’s proprietary scheme and functionality. The IT team explained, “Rocket really spoke to the needs of the business; they understood that AHT was the gold standard for us and backed up all claims with solid technology.”

Results

Deployment took four months. During this time, Rocket helped the IT team optimize overall network performance while laying out a longer-term plan for additional improvements. In particular, Rocket assisted in isolating a batch process that was running during the day, inadvertently affecting call center response times. Rocket also worked with the team to achieve more efficient load balancing to further maximize performance. Today, Orchard Brands has successfully migrated its green screens to more compelling web browser solutions. CSRs can call up the appropriate web screen at any time during a customer call while viewing an image of the item during order processing. “The ability to call up the actual image of the item the customer is requesting during the live call has significantly improved accuracy, while also decreasing the handling time,” explains Orchard Brands. “In addition, we’ve been able to minimize costs while providing a better customer experience.”

All tracking of SKUs and discounts are automated, whereas in the past CSRs sometimes had to manually calculate promotional discounts. In Phase One of the project, the call center eliminated 50 seconds from the entire order entry process. With Gartner estimating that the average call center call costs anywhere from 18 to 45 cents per minute, the savings for Orchard Brands are substantial, while also delivering a quality customer experience. With the enhanced usability, the call center no longer sees younger temporary employees dropping out before completing the training.

Explains the Orchard Brands Director of the call center, “The new GUI has helped streamline the order management system, reducing training time while enhancing the CSRs’ access to new tools that have helped to significantly improve the customer experience.”

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Call Center Director
Orchard Brands

- rocketsoftware.com
- info@rocketsoftware.com
- US: 1 877 577 4323
EMEA: 0800 520 0439
APAC: 1800 823 405
- twitter.com/rocket
- www.linkedin.com/company/rocket-software
- www.facebook.com/RocketSoftwareInc
- blog.rocketsoftware.com

