

Schneider Electric Uses Information Access to Improve Sales and Customer Service

Background

When Schneider Electric - one of the world's leading manufacturers of equipment for electrical distribution, industrial control, and automation - acquired a new part of its Automation Business, it became clear that combining the companies' operations had created an "information gap" which was causing a decline in channel satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and sales in the Automation Business.

Challenge

Under the new company, the business lost the "know how" of its dedicated sales channel and needed to educate a new sales channel about their product line. The new channel found it extremely difficult to get the information they required about the Automation Business' products.

They needed an effective way to get complete, accurate product information to the sales channel so that everyone could easily access the information they needed to effectively market, sell, and support their products. The existing process was cumbersome, inefficient, and expensive. Multiple versions of the same information were being generated by different departments at different times, using incompatible technologies.

Objectives

After assessing the situation, John and his team determined that all product-related information must be

- immediately accessible to the people who need it
 - created only once
 - reused in multiple ways, such as for requirements documents, product specifications, brochures, presentations, and training
 - stored in one place
 - available to everyone regardless of location, and
 - easily maintainable.
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Solution

To meet those criteria, they created a solution that combined

- the Information Mapping method as the standard approach for creating accessible units of information
 - a sophisticated SGML/XML-based document management and publishing system created for them by Ovidius, one of Information Mapping's partners in Germany
 - a Lotus Notes-based knowledge repository where all information is stored in a central database, and
 - the Web as the universal way for users to access and submit information and provide feedback and suggestions.
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Results

"Information Mapping was the method we selected for our content development. It makes non-writers into better writers, makes translation easier, and presents information in a way that people clearly understand. Every document I have written using the Information Mapping method has been successful in its purpose," says John.

The complete solution allows more than 3,500 registered users throughout the distribution network to submit content and share knowledge through their Web browsers. The system is now used to answer over 6,000 telephone and 60,000 web site inquiries per month, and every inquiry allows them to collect feedback and add or change information to meet user needs.

Since the system was implemented, Schneider's Automation Business has seen sales increase dramatically, and the number of delighted customers who are "extremely satisfied" and would "highly recommend" the products has more than doubled.
