



U.K. Application Service Provider Boosts Revenues 30 percent, Customer Base 50 Percent

Overview

Country or Region: United Kingdom

Industry: IT Services

Partner Profile

The CRM Business provides companies throughout the United Kingdom with online access to integrated solutions built around Microsoft Dynamics CRM.

Business Situation

To create the integrated solutions that clients wanted, The CRM Business needed access to an enterprise-class messaging and collaboration infrastructure, but it did not want to host such an infrastructure itself.

Solution

With the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services, The CRM Business can seize the opportunities to create integrated solutions that meet its client needs—without having to host its own infrastructure

Benefits

- Integrates easily with Microsoft Dynamics® CRM business software
- Deploys rapidly and cost effectively
- Opens doors to additional services
- Accelerates sales velocity

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Roger Collins, Managing Director, The CRM Business

Executives at The CRM Business saw real revenue opportunities in integrating traditional customer relationship management (CRM) solutions with enterprise-class messaging and collaboration services. They also saw no way to seize those opportunities without making significant investments in servers and software licenses. Neither The CRM Business nor its clients wanted to host a Microsoft® Exchange Server or Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server infrastructure—and without access to such an infrastructure, The CRM Business could not build the integrated solutions that clients wanted. When The CRM Business learned of the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services, though, it found an enterprise-class option that it could use to deliver the integrated solutions that its clients were seeking—and business has taken off.

Microsoft®
Online Services

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Situation

Around the world, IT service providers and their clients are looking for ways to operate more profitably in these challenging times. For some, that means reducing internal costs. For others, that means finding ways to operate more flexibly to respond faster to opportunities and challenges. Many companies are trying to do all these things and more.

For executives at The CRM Business, a U.K.-based Software plus Services provider, the drive among current and prospective clients to lower costs, increase flexibility, and operate more efficiently was creating both opportunities and challenges. The CRM Business has long helped its clients meet their business requirements through solutions built around Dynamics CRM, and company executives could see the opportunity to help clients operate more efficiently and effectively by extending those solutions with integrated messaging and collaboration services.

But there lay the challenge. "We're a solutions company," explains Roger Collins, Managing Director of the CRM Business, "not an infrastructure company. We don't want to be in the business of hosting Microsoft Exchange Server, Microsoft Office SharePoint Server, and Microsoft Office Communications Server." Collins also understood that most of its existing and potential customers did not want to build out an infrastructure to support these services either. At a time when The CRM Business clients were trying to lower internal costs and overhead, that approach was not going to work.

This challenge of how to create flexible, integrated, cost-effective solutions for

today's organizations persisted for months—but when Collins learned about the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services, he could see that a real solution was at hand.

Solution

The Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services enables The CRM Business to integrate Dynamics CRM with collaboration tools and shared workspaces, workflow, desktop and mobile e-mail, calendaring and contacts, instant messaging, presence, audio/video conferencing, and Web conferencing to create powerful solutions tailored to an individual client's particular business needs. Yet because the applications supporting these enterprise-class services—including Microsoft SharePoint® Online, Microsoft Exchange Online, Office Live Meeting, and Microsoft Office Communications Online—run on servers residing in state-of-the-art Microsoft data centers, none of the organizations using these services need to invest in on-premises infrastructure to take advantage of these services. At the same time, because Microsoft Online Services offers Microsoft Active Directory® directory service sync and co-existence, The CRM Business clients with an existing messaging and collaboration solution can effectively extend the reach of their existing domains without adding to or reconfiguring their services.

Microsoft hosts and maintains the servers with its own staff of hardware and software experts, supplies patches and security updates in real time, and guarantees 99.9 percent uptime with a financially-backed SLA (service level agreement), so The CRM Business clients always have access to the latest, most

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up-to-date versions of the applications to which they subscribe.

The Business Productivity Online Suite provides The CRM Business clients with a great deal of flexibility, too. Instead of having to purchase separate server and client licenses for all of the different components of an integrated solution, organizations using the solutions that The CRM Business has created can simply subscribe to the services supporting that solution. Clients can subscribe on a per-user, per-month basis for access to any or all the services in the Business Productivity Online Suite, which eliminates large up-front licensing costs and enables most organizations to cover the nominal expense of accessing these services using operational rather than capital budgets. Access to the entire Business Productivity Online Suite is available for one low monthly fee, but for users that need access to only one to two services—it is possible to subscribe to a individual services only for an even lower monthly fee.

Benefits

For The CRM Business, the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services offers numerous benefits. It enables the company to present its clients with integrated solutions that meet their real business requirements, without requiring them to assume the cost and responsibility for day-to-day solution management and upkeep. At the same time, the opportunity to add value through integration and service enhancements is adding significantly to the company’s bottom line.

Expanding Reach and Revenue

Collins sees the Business Productivity Online Suite as being instrumental in helping The CRM Business expand its

customer base and profitability. He projects that that base will expand by 50 percent or more within the first 18 months of offering the Business Productivity Online Suite.

“The Business Productivity Online Suite provides us with new opportunities to solve business needs,” says Collins, “and that opens new doors for us. We can have new conversations about extending their existing solutions. Or we can propose a solution based solely on the Business Productivity Online Suite, and that gives us an opportunity to integrate Dynamics CRM in the future. The opportunities feed one another, and that makes it easier for us to get into new sales situations.

“We don’t lead with a discussion about technology with technologists,” Collins goes on to say. “We tend to talk about business processes with operational managers and directors. We try to understand a company’s business requirements, and then we deliver solutions that address those requirements.”

Much of the time, Collins says, customers describe business processes that no single technology can support. An integrated approach is required, and that’s where the Business Productivity Online Suite meets the needs of the developers at The CRM Business. They can bring their integration expertise to bear on the technology and create a solution involving CRM and messaging and collaboration software, the technical aspects of which are essentially transparent to the client. From their perspective, it simply meets their business needs—quickly and cost effectively.

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For The CRM Business, the ability to deliver those integrated solutions is proving to be very profitable too. Not only is the Software plus Services provider gaining annual recurring revenue from Microsoft for each user it brings into Microsoft Online Services, but it is making a good deal more money from its integration, migration, and other value-added services. "Online services weren't even part of our business a year ago," says Collins. "It was all on-premises work for clients. Now, work related to online services is probably 30 percent of our revenue—and it will be an even larger percentage going forward."

Winning at Great City Attractions

Great City Attractions (GCA) is a perfect example of a business that needed precisely the kind of flexible, integrated solution that The CRM Business could build with the Business Productivity Online Suite. GCA is the market leader in the installation and operation of giant observation wheels and is now one of the most successful and experienced operators in the world, with a fleet of wheels ranging in size from 40 meters to the 165 meter Singapore Flyer, presently the world's largest.

GCA has a presence in many of the world's most distinguished cities including Belfast, Brisbane, Brussels, London, Manchester, Paris, Perth, and Singapore and has just launched in Copenhagen and Sheffield. The company plans to add a number of wheels to its existing fleet throughout 2009 and beyond with a strong pipeline of current and potential new projects under development—in locations as diverse as Beijing, Berlin and Orlando—to fuel further growth. When launched, the company's Beijing wheel will reach a new record height of 208 meters, and is

expected to attract more than 4 million visitors annually.

Given its rapid worldwide expansion, GCA needed a solution that could enable it to store, manage, and access controlled versions of documents, contracts, site plans, site images, and more. And it needed a way to do this that did not require an extensive infrastructure in each of the locations where it is building. Says Nigel Ward, Vice Chief Executive Officer of GCA, "we needed a solution which was both secure and easily accessible from anywhere in the world. Equally important: The solution has to be able to scale to cope with our rapid growth and must be easy to adapt. The combined CRM and SharePoint Online solution that we now have delivers on all of these and provides key management system that helps us drive the business forward."

By integrating Microsoft SharePoint Online with Dynamics CRM, The CRM Business has created the solution that meets all of its clients' requirements. Employees can interact with the information from any location with Internet access, and so they have been able to take advantage of a company-wide collaboration solution without any local infrastructure requirements. Project-related documents and contracts are stored in a SharePoint Online library and linked to the project and customer information within Dynamics CRM, so project team members could easily find all the information related to a project. At the same time, access controls within SharePoint Online ensure security by limiting access to sensitive project data to a small list of authorized users.

"We honestly don't talk with GCA about what's Dynamics CRM and what's the

Business Productivity Online Suite," says Collins. "We stay focused on the business need. GCA wanted to store and share documents, version histories, and more. They wanted a central repository of information that they could use to manage their customers and projects. That's what we gave them."

Increasing Business Velocity

Because Microsoft Online Services offers the Business Productivity Online Suite on a per user per month basis, The CRM Business can tell a client exactly what the cost of their new services will be—even during a first meeting, and this is helping close deals faster than ever before.

"In the past," says Collins, "to go in and size the servers, order the hardware, the software, and the licenses, and set everything up for a complete messaging and collaboration solution using Exchange Server and Office SharePoint Server, we could be talking about a multi-month sales cycle. Yesterday, we went in and proposed such a solution based on the Business Productivity Online Suite and we closed the deal in one day. That is a huge increase in velocity for us.

"Our company is going to grow quite rapidly as a consequence of the opportunities afforded by the Business Productivity Online Suite," Collins goes on to say. "We're quite excited about what we have been able to do with the Business Productivity Online Suite and CRM for our customers, and I have a feeling that we're only scratching the surface of the solutions we can build. There's a lot more we can do to build revenue around the opportunities that are opening up."

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to:

www.microsoft.com

For more information about The CRM Business, Ltd. products and services, call +44 0870 766 9875 or visit the Web site at: www.thecrmbusiness.com

Microsoft Online Services

Microsoft Online Services are business-class communication and collaboration solutions delivered as a subscription service and hosted by Microsoft. These offerings help make it easier for customers to rapidly and cost-effectively access the most up-to-date technologies, and are designed for rapid deployment to provide customers with streamlined communications, simplified management, and business-class reliability and security features.

For IT staffers, Microsoft Online Services help reduce the burden of performing routine IT management tasks such as installation, provisioning, ongoing maintenance, updates, and upgrades, making it possible for them to spend more time on initiatives that move the business forward. The Online offerings are backed by strong service level agreements and are designed to meet the regulatory compliance and reliability needs of enterprise customers. On a technical level, the offerings boast the sophistication and reliability that customers expect from Microsoft, which continues to invest heavily in building data centers to support the Online family of services.

For more information, visit:
www.microsoft.com/online

Software and Services

- Microsoft Online Services
 - Microsoft Business Productivity Online Standard Suite