sage

CommLink grows by 50 per cent with Sage CRM

COMMLINK
your business extension

Customer
CommLink

Industry
Call Handling Services

Location
Mansfield, UK

Solution
Sage CRM

Background story

CommLink provides a range of communication services, from front-of-house call answering to complete customer contact centre solutions 24 hours a day. Clients range from sole traders to large national and international companies that use CommLink to represent them to their customers and as an intermediary in their disaster recovery plans.

Customer relationships are integral to the success of every business, but for CommLink they are particularly crucial, as Managing Director Mike Burkinshaw explained. "For some of our clients we are the first point of contact they have with their customers," he said. "The two mantras for our staff are that if we do our job right nobody knows it's us and if we get it wrong, it's our client's neck that we put on the line."

Burkinshaw always knew that a CRM system would be central to success and has been on a journey implementing some of the best-known solutions available. He found a leading online platform easy to use but expensive to run, while an on-premise application had a poor user interface and was too complex and hard to integrate with other systems.

Somewhat scarred by the experience, he thought it was time to give Sage CRM a try and signed up for the 30-day free trial. The decision has proved transformational.

"I'd had a lot of experience with CRM systems and knew what I wanted to do with it. Within hours of starting the Sage trial we were putting in and pulling out fields and tables; I was on the phone to Sage to see how configurable it was and discovered how easy it related to other systems. I knew very quickly that we had found our CRM solution," he said.

'We believe that with Sage's automation and workflow we will be able to get a client up and running on our systems in three hours.'

Mike Burkinshaw
Managing Director
CommLink

Challenge
Despite bad experiences with CRM systems in the past, CommLink needed a new solution that could support the company's next phase of growth and development.

Solution
Sage CRM ticked all the boxes for CommLink with its easy-to-use-interface, rich features and functionality to support sales and marketing, and the capacity to be integrated with other in-house systems.

Results
Sage CRM contributed to 50 per cent year-on-year growth for the business and improved customer satisfaction levels by 20-25 per cent. The application is now being used to drive the next phase of growth and a new business.

'Sage has dramatically increased the amount of business we have, and I expect to see a 50–75 per cent growth on turnover as a result of our marketing and sales efforts within the next 12 months'

Mike Burkinshaw
Managing Director
CommLink

Key to success

Mike Burkinshaw had Sage CRM deployed on site with user licenses for all 14 of his sales and administrative staff. The deployment schedule coincided with the latest release of Sage CRM, which adds business insight functionality, offers a more contemporary interface, and enhanced email-marketing capabilities.

The last factor in particular proved very timely. With Sage CRM, CommLink can track and monitor emails campaigns, see how quickly each email is opened and schedule an appropriate response as well as build intelligence into the business that can be used in subsequent marketing plans.

The new knowledge and insights are essential because CommLink is at a watershed in its development having taken on a sales and marketing manager to grow the company further. Plans are also underway to launch a new business which is aimed at small companies and sole traders and requires a heavily automated backend. Sage CRM will be crucial to this.

In the main business, Burkinshaw and his team have adapted the new software to the way the company works. A Sage business partner, Qmulus Solutions, was brought in to integrate different systems including Sage 50, the accountancy package that was already fundamental to CommLink. Linking the SQL server environment is also in the pipeline, making it possible to share data across disparate systems and access it all from inside Sage CRM.

"I love the interface," said Burkinshaw. "[Sage CRM] has a simple 'drag and drop' feel but if you need to do something more complex and put some code in, you can do that too. It's user-friendly and customisable."

Bringing about change

CommLink experienced 50 per cent growth in 2014, a significant ramp up in business that Burkinshaw puts down in part to the use of Sage CRM. And he credits it directly for improving customer satisfaction levels by 20-25 per cent.

As soon as it was deployed, account managers made it the platform for managing relationships with hundreds of existing customers, pre-empting problems by being more proactive. "We use Sage CRM to schedule our account management calls," explained Burkinshaw. "The system is configured to show clients in different categories: the ones we need to call monthly, for example, as opposed to the ones we contact a couple of times a year."

As the company focuses more on sales and growing the business, Sage CRM is also used to manage email marketing campaigns. The latest version has out-of-the box integration with MailChimp email-marketing. With around 4,000 prospects in the Sage CRM database and another 8,000 to be added, the company sends out 1,500 emails each week and supports them with follow-up calls and social media activity, all managed and logged in Sage CRM.

"Sage gives us the workflow to see who is reacting to what and ensure an appropriate and timely response," he said. "All the team loves it because it's clear and easy to use; it's not clunky like some of its competitors."

The SQL integration with in-house multiple databases gives the company access to more data, more easily, such as call volumes, call duration, and online recordings. Much better visibility of client activity and how it relates to revenue has had a positive impact on the bottom line. "Sage has dramatically increased the amount of business we have, and I expect to see a 50-75 per cent growth on turnover as a result of our marketing and sales efforts within the next 12 months," said Burkinshaw.

Looking to the future

Commlink plans to set up Take My Calls.co.uk, aimed at small businesses and sole traders. To deliver a low-cost-of-entry service at scale, CommLink will look to automate as many processes as possible, particularly in terms of setting up new client accounts. The plan is to integrate Sage CRM with Sage Pay, Sage's payment solution. "We believe that with Sage's automation and workflow we will be able to get a client up and running on our systems in three hours," said Burkinshaw.

He sums up: "Sage CRM's configurability has been key as our business develops and moves into different areas. I'm confident we can achieve virtually anything we want with Sage CRM and that's good to know"

About Sage CRM

Over 15,000 small and medium sized companies across the globe use Sage CRM every day to accelerate sales, drive business productivity and make every customer interaction count. It is used by enterprising, growing companies seeking new ways to interact with customers, leverage the power of social media and take advantage of the latest mobile developments to further grow their business. When combined with Sage ERP, our customers enjoy better business insight, increased efficiencies and productivity, and gain a single, customer-centric view across their entire business. So whether you're just starting out or have already grown to several hundred employees, Sage CRM can help accelerate your business success.

Accelerate your business success with a free 30-day trial at www.sagecrm.com

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