CASE STUDY

attachmate

Cooper Booth Wholesale keeps customers happy with 'slick' solution

Verastream Host Integrator web-enables legacy functionality

QUICK VIEW

Problem

Customer loss due to unreliable, outmoded ordering system.

Solution

Used Verastream to provide customer self-service based on back-end UNIX application.

Results

- A web application that keeps customers loyal and satisfied.
- First set of new screens rolled out in two weeks.
- Reliable, real-time data access with easy online ordering.
- Web orders up from 12 per month to several daily.
- Better internal efficiencies.

Cooper Booth Wholesale has been in the distribution business since 1865. Recognized as one of the top convenience-store wholesalers in the United States, CBW serves retailers in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Virginia, and West Virginia.

To stay competitive, CBW needed to upgrade their customer web site, which allows their retail customers to place orders, manage retail pricing, review reports, and search for items.

Responding to Customer Demands

CBW had a vendor-supplied e-commerce solution, but it was impossible for CBW to maintain the online application because of its many "bugs" and its outdated technology, said IT Manager Becky Rhoads. Moreover, customers were forced to navigate multiple screens, handle cumbersome setups, repeatedly fill in fields, and deal with unwanted pop-ups.

Rhoads knew that CBW must quickly give customers what they wanted: an easy-to-use self-service system with updated features and real-time processing. Her IT staff needed a tool that would not bog them down with long learning cycles; speed of implementation was becoming critical to customer retention.

Finding the Right Solution

Attachmate® Verastream® Host Integrator was one of the products CBW considered in their search for a solution. A long-time satisfied user of Attachmate Reflection® terminal emulation software, CBW wondered if Verastream would meet Reflection's level of excellence.

Verastream Host Integrator exposes mainframe data and logic as services that can be used in web, mobile, call-center, or other applications such as CRM. A non-invasive solution, Verastream requires no rewriting of host applications. After seeing an on-site demo, CBW purchased Verastream Host Integrator just a week later.

"None of the other products was as slick as Verastream," said Rhoads. "Instead of having to rewrite an interface and go out to the web with it, Verastream lets us simply select and web-enable the functionality we need from our order system."

> "Customers are more willing to buy from us because, with Verastream, we can accommodate the way they like to do business."
>
> – Becky Rhoads
> IT Manager
> Cooper Booth Wholesale

Rhoads added that if everything on the host system had needed to be recoded, the project could not have been accomplished. "I also like Verastream's versatility in terms of putting services on the web using .Net or JavaBeans, etc., because we typically outsource our web development," she said.

No 3270? No Problem.

The fact that CBW's host application was VT-based did not concern Rhoads, even though there are very few software vendors with the expertise to do character-mode integration. "We knew Attachmate could handle UNIX applications because of our positive experience with Reflection," she said. "It's a relief to work with a hard source in such an easy way."

Because CBW's order system is menu-driven, developers used Verastream to model the menus and then handed off the models to their web design company. The web developers had no prior experience with Verastream, but they proved its ease of use; they rolled out the new application in less than two months.

Good News Inside CBW ...

When customers began using the self-service application, a dramatic change took place inside CBW. Before, the IT staff had to deal with web site issues every day. "Customers often had trouble accessing the site and we were spending untold staff hours trying to fix it," Rhoads said. "Now it practically manages itself." With Verastream, CBW maintains control of their host data and logic because they can tailor each store's degree of access to specific source-application data and logic.

The Verastream solution has also produced benefits for the CBW pricing staff. They no longer have to calculate retail prices, because customers are doing it themselves. And the new application means that customer-facing staff can be freed up for revenue-generating activities such as sales promotions.

... And Outside CBW

Now customers can search CBW's product inventory to compile, place, and change orders, check order status, look up accounts receivable balances, or review credit memos. And with the Verastream solution, multiple stores in a chain can simultaneously place multiple orders. "This is a big hit with the chains," said Rhoads.

Convenience stores have also been able to make their ordering process more efficient with the use of standing order guides. Instead of starting from scratch with each order, an established list of items can be automatically generated for each store. Customers can modify their standing lists whenever they need to adjust their purchasing patterns.

CBW has more than 80 stores using the new system. "Before, customers were avoiding our web site, because it was so difficult," Rhoads said. "Now we have customers telling us how pleased they are with the changes. It's much easier for them."

About Attachmate

Attachmate, owned by an investment group led by Francisco Partners, Golden Gate Capital and Thoma Cressey Equity Partners, enables IT organizations to extend mission critical services and assure they are managed, secure, and compliant. Attachmate's leading solutions include host connectivity, systems and security management, and PC lifecycle management. Our goal is to empower IT organizations to deliver trusted applications, manage services levels, and ensure compliance by leveraging knowledge, automation, and secured connectivity. For more information, visit **www.attachmate.com**.

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