



The leading, global commercial food equipment manufacturer provides installation, maintenance and repair services for their equipment along with affiliated commercial food service equipment and retail products.

Hitachi Consulting implemented an automated field service solution to enhance customer experience and achieve a million dollar a month business improvement, based on administrative, paper and fuel cost reductions; increased customer renewals; and new business.



Case Study: Commercial Food Equipment Manufacturer

Business Challenge

Since its inception over 100 years ago, the client, the service organization for the global food equipment manufacturer referenced in this case study, has grown its operations to include over 90 branches and 1,100 factory-trained service technicians in the United States.

As customer buying decisions for service are often made and always processed locally, the client operates as a collection of decentralized business units, while also providing central business functions such as IT, marketing, accounting, training, and parts procurement and delivery.

Supporting this model for more than 20 years, the client's legacy system and processes were quickly being outgrown by increasing customer service expectations. In addition, the client planned to expand its offerings by streamlining services for competitive products and providing customers direct access to their service information. To support this growth the client anticipated a 40 percent increase in technician staff, and recognized the need to eliminate the administrative cost and problems associated with its largely manual system.

The client's biggest challenges included:

- Extensive manual entry effort at the branch level causing high staffing, billing errors, and lack of focus on building customer relationships
- Manual scheduling and directing service technician routing, dependent on dispatcher knowledge and ability
- Customer demand for more flexible and detailed service management

The Solution

To process a customer order from service through dispatch to billing, branch administrators relied on more than 37 different applications both locally and through remote terminal mainframe access to headquarters.

The client engaged Hitachi Consulting to replace legacy systems and processes with an automated field service solution built on the Microsoft Field Service for Dynamics AX platform. This provided an integrated system that allowed for a web-based field service function.

The field services solution affords branches and service technicians immediate access to the right resources needed to fulfill and invoice a customer's service request. Dispatchers can easily match a technician with the required skill-set to a customer request, view availability and location of parts, and use a graphical dispatch board to ascertain the technician's location, scheduling sequence, and progress.

Paper is eliminated as technicians in the field use a mobile device that allows them to handle and document customer service orders, while viewing service level, pricing, and warranty agreements; the location of required parts; and all associated service manuals. Upon completion of the service order by the technician, invoicing is automatically processed without any additional data entry; and all service history is maintained in the system for future use.

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In 2007 the client and Hitachi Consulting successfully piloted the new system in a production capacity. Implementation of the solution within the first branch is underway and full national implementation by a trained Hobart Services team is expected to proceed on a branch-by-branch basis with further assistance by Hitachi Consulting as needed.

Business Benefits

From a financial perspective, the client has calculated the resulting business improvement from the new system when fully implemented to be a million dollars per month, a culmination of reduced legacy system, administrative, paper and transportation costs; additional technician utilization; increased customer renewals; and new business.

From an efficiency perspective, the new solution will enable a 90 percent reduction in field paperwork, while enforcing SLA and correct pricing procedures and documenting any safety issues as they arise. With the elimination of redundant data entry and associated billing errors, half of branch management time will be freed from administrative burdens that prevent them from dedicating their attention to important customer matters that affect loyalty, growth and profitability. And, as the business grows, new field technicians and dispatchers will be trained to process a service request in a fraction of the time it now takes.

From a features perspective, the client's automated field service solution:

- Improves technician scheduling/utilization as the system will automatically account for service technician skill set, home and current location; customer location, priorities, and service level agreements; and parts availability
- Reduces dispatcher-technician communication time and technician support communication;
- Provides service technicians with the availability and pick up location of required parts
- Provides service technicians with readily available service history and SLA s well as service manuals and other technical information on mobile device
- Alerts service managers and technicians when an SLA requirement is not being met
- Allows for quick documentation of service call detail
- Eliminates manual entry of service call information for invoicing, leading to reduction of administrative support costs and time to invoicing
- Reduces manual tracking and billing errors
- Enables customer to log and track calls, access service history, and retrieve asset management information



About Hitachi Consulting Corporation
As Hitachi, Ltd.'s (NYSE: HIT) global consulting company, with operations in the United States, Europe and Asia, Hitachi Consulting is a recognized leader in delivering proven business and IT strategies and solutions to Global 2000 companies across many industries. With a balanced view of strategy, people, process and technology, we work with companies to understand their unique business needs, and to develop and implement practical business strategies and technology solutions. From business strategy development through application deployment, our consultants are committed to helping clients quickly realize measurable business value and achieve sustainable ROI.

Hitachi Consulting's client base includes 25 percent of the Global 100 as well as many leading mid-market companies. We offer a client-focused, collaborative approach and transfer knowledge throughout each engagement.

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