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Faster response times improve customer care for SNT Deutschland clients

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>
> – Bert Hartmann
>   Manager Purchasing and Facilities
>   SNT Deutschland AG

Background

One of the top five call-centre providers in Germany, SNT Deutschland AG is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the international telecommunications group KPN. One of its responsibilities at its Potsdam customer contact centre is to manage all of the customer correspondence for a large German mobile communications firm.

SNT Deutschland receives more than 16,000 emails, faxes and letters from the provider's customers every day. Each of them has to be read, answered and archived in compliance with storage guidelines.

The Challenge

Speed of response to customers is increasingly important in the mobile communications business. "In this industry, good service is what sets you apart," says Bert Hartmann, Manager of Purchasing and Facilities at SNT Deutschland. That's because tariffs among competitors may only vary by a few cents, so customer satisfaction is the best way to retain customers.

SNT Deutschland was processing customer correspondence manually. The slow process seriously limited the volumes that the SNT team could manage. It also provided too much opportunity for human error in directing mail.

SNT needed to increase the capacity of its mailroom for handling inbound documents, optimise its processes for document handling, and develop a streamlined but flexible workflow to direct correspondence where it needed to go. The pressure was on to deliver tangible benefits to the client's customers fast.

The Solution

SNT chose Xerox to develop a solution because we could demonstrate how an individually tailored unified content platform could help to meet required productivity and cost targets. Such a platform uses process standards to manage all the different channels of correspondence — email, fax and letter — to ensure a consistent quality of customer care across all written communications.

Xerox now opens, sorts, scans and categorises incoming mail, ready to be delivered to the screens of SNT customer relations staff. At the Potsdam site 17 Xerox mailroom staff receive an average of 8,000 letters and 6,600 fax messages a day. Envelopes are manually sorted to take out misdirected correspondence, personal correspondence and mail intended for management.

40% more mail handled by half the staff.
Tough customer service targets met.

The remaining envelopes are opened by machine and their contents removed. Each piece of correspondence is automatically issued with a barcode label that gives it a serial identification number. A high-performance scanner then scans and digitises between 80 and 90 double-sided A4 sheets a minute.

The onward processing of the scanned files, together with emails, is largely automated using Xerox workflow software that can handle both structured (forms) and unstructured documents with ease. With the help of optical character recognition (OCR), the solution can identify key text within each piece of correspondence, such as names and telephone numbers, which can be compared with the customer database to identify the sender.

In configuring the software we worked with SNT to identify a range of keyword phrases and words, such as 'order', which enable the software to classify documents automatically into categories and use that information to determine how the correspondence should be processed. Altogether there are about 400 different keyword phrases by which correspondence is classified.

There are also 25 different categories of customer and the solution can recognise graphical information to classify a document as a particular type of form, even if the form is damaged or reduced in size through faxing.

This level of automated classification is a hugely effective tool for process optimisation. Each category is subject to different processing rules, creating a highly differentiated workflow with comparatively little effort. Categories can also be assigned priorities, so that cancellations, for example, can be processed more quickly. Any documents that cannot be classified automatically are manually categorised on-screen by our staff.

The Results

"With the right mix of technology, process consultancy and project competence, Xerox is helping us to fulfil our promise to our corporate clients," comments Hartmann.

All correspondence for the mobile communications client is now delivered in digitised form, together with relevant customer information, to the inboxes of over 500 SNT customer relations staff tasked with meeting the service levels that SNT has agreed with this client to support an immediate response to queries. SNT's staff are now able to process priority documents in as little as two hours, and 99.7% of documents within 12 hours.

Fast processing by Xerox in the mailroom is key to SNT achieving these results. It takes an average of 120 minutes for us to process a document, with just 35 minutes for high-priority faxes and 215 minutes for paper-based letters. Error rates are now down to under 2% and still declining. We're processing about 40% more mail with half as many staff, resulting in a productivity increase of 65%.

The Future

Strategic service partnerships are a cornerstone of SNT's customer contact management business. Building on the expertise and high-value process outsourcing that Xerox can offer, SNT plans to work with us to market this solution to other SNT clients and prospects.

Case Study Snapshot

The Challenge
- Automate manual processing of customer correspondence
- Remove errors arising during transfer and routing of customer correspondence
- Implement a solution designed for increasing volumes

The Solution
- Opening, sorting, scanning and categorisation of incoming mail by Xerox staff and technology
- Processing of structured and unstructured documents through text recognition and mostly automated document categorisation
- Effective distribution of mail to relevant customer relations staff, together with priority indications

The Results
- 99.7% of documents processed by SNT within 12 hours
- Priority documents processed by SNT within two hours
- Paper eliminated as far as possible from correspondence processing
- 40% more mail handled by half the staff in the mailroom
- 65% increase in mailroom productivity

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