

CASE STUDY

IBM WEB SERVICES

Drive True Sales & Marketing Effectiveness with IBM's Web Services

Background : Capturing real-time customer buying motivations and preferences can help drive true sales and marketing effectiveness

Online Insight enables organizations to improve sales and marketing effectiveness through a real-time Collaborative Customer Conversation™ that captures each customer's personal needs and preferences when making complex purchasing decisions. This ability to obtain and analyze personal preference and buying motivation data, at the point of interaction, provides you first-hand, real-time knowledge into the reasons WHY customers buy the products they do, allowing you to make strategic business decisions NOW.

Online Insight is helping some of the world's leading companies close more sales at a lower cost, delivering immediate value as a revenue-generating solution. Leveraging the company's advanced, multi-channel guided selling and market intelligence solutions, clients can fill the gap left by systems that only capture demographic and transactional data, leaving the critical "real-time, at the point of interaction, WHY question" unanswered.

The Online Insight eMpower Platform is comprised of four tightly integrated solutions:

- **eMpower Motivations** : Using proprietary dynamic dialog technologies, eMpower Motivations engages consumers in an interactive conversation to uncover underlying buying motivators and "hot buttons" that lead a customer to purchase your products.
- **eMpower Buyers** : Provides key components of the buying process – knowledge, personal choice and individual fit – providing a degree of consumer confidence necessary to execute your call to action – immediately.
- **eMpower Distribution** : Transforms information seekers into active buyers by empowering your distribution channels with the capability and knowledge needed to close more sales.
- **eMpower Enterprise** : Delivers market intelligence on buyer preferences and motivations, empowering the entire enterprise with the information necessary to deliver the right product, to the right market, at the right time and price.

Challenge : Knowing WHY customers buy instead of just what they buy

Today's business-to-business and business-to-consumer companies selling complex, multi-attribute products are finding that, even after building robust e-commerce sites and call centers to attract customers, converting these customers to buyers is very challenging. Industry statistics indicate that less than 5% of visitors to e-commerce sites actually complete the purchase. Visitors often lack the confidence to complete the transaction, or have little confidence that the solution recommended was in fact, the best product. This is especially true when the customer is considering the purchase of complex products such as financial services, computer hardware, automobiles, homes or consumer electronics. Additionally, while merchants are able to capture the basic transaction details, they have not been able to uncover the fundamental buying motivations driving their customers' purchase decisions.

These factors indicate there is an urgent market need for technologies that provide assistance for selling complex products as well as a means for understanding and acting on the underlying motivations behind each buyer's purchase decisions. Online Insight's solutions satisfy this market requirement by closing the loop between the buyer and seller.

“Return on Relationship (ROR) is the new metric for measuring business success as an indicator of how many customer relationships you maintain and how profitable each relationship becomes over time,” says Dr. Bradley Fordham. “Online Insight’s solutions provide you with control of ROR, in addition to the traditional cost savings commonly measured by ROI, and by working with the IBM jstart team to extend our solutions with web services we take this differentiation even further.”

Web services allow you to instantly extend your best of breed selling experiences to partners, brokers, and business-to-business marketplaces. They permit Online Insight’s marketplace simulations and preference analytics to be instantly accessed by partners and external applications to maximize the value of knowing WHY your customers are buying which products right now through the widest possible collaboration among stakeholders.

Solution : Use real-time, first-hand preferences to drive sales and marketing

Online Insight allows an enterprise to execute on a “forward-thinking” business model, making strategic decisions based on knowing “WHY” customers are buying products now, instead of looking through the “rear-view mirror” to analyze only “what” they bought last month or year. This new model provides a fast and easy way to determine which products best align with each customer’s personal preferences across all sales channels: online, contact center, kiosk and branches. It also helps accelerate sales by increasing customer confidence that the products you recommend are truly the best choice.

In addition these solutions have the following features:

- Deliver quick and measurable value as a standalone solution, filling the gap left by most customer relationship management solutions that can only track “what” customers buy, leaving the critical “WHY” question unanswered.
- Strategically differentiate your company from the competition with real-time access to your customer’s personal preference information. This allows you to make key business decisions based on today’s customer preferences rather than making inferences from analyzing historical transactional and demographic data.

Instead of pushing products to customers, Online Insight enables customers to “pull” products and services aligned with their unique, personal preferences to them, while explicitly capturing these preferences directly from the customer, in real-time.

Benefit : Increase revenue and profit through better customer sales experiences

IBM’s Web Services allow Online Insight customers to instantly and consistently deploy best sales practices across all direct and indirect sales channels. Every customer conversation conducted provides detailed insight into the reasons WHY the customer makes a particular purchasing decision. This insight is added to a “virtual focus group,” allowing future marketing and product development efforts to be driven by forward-looking customer preferences rather than by historical market research and demographics. Leveraging this focus group, you can develop more effective sales, marketing and product development strategies to be used across all channels.

Creating the right infrastructure to accelerate business, take advantage of evolving markets and meet changing customer requirements, requires innovation and leadership. Web Services provide the technical benefits of open standards, global directory services, and easy external connection to complex system interfaces to help companies build, grow and deploy next-generation e-business strategies.

Written and orginally published by IBM Global Services