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– Jeff Jackson, Senior Manager, WW Systems and Applications Customer Support



INDUSTRY

High Tech – Software

WEBEX APPLICATION

Support Center

SUMMARY

Business Objects designed eSupport, their online support system, using WebEx Support Center so that cases can be handled ‘face-to-face’ online. This allows support calls to be quickly and properly diagnosed or escalated without sending an engineer out to the customers’ site.

ABOUT BUSINESS OBJECTS

Line of Business

Business Objects is the world’s leading business intelligence (BI) software company. With more than 30,000 customers worldwide

Headquarters

San Jose, (California)
& Paris, France

Number of Employees

3,800

WebEx Customer since 2002

Business Objects reduces support centre costs and increases customer satisfaction

Business Objects, headquartered in San Jose, California and Paris, France, builds business intelligence (BI) software that allows employees, customers and partners to make strategic decisions by turning data into valuable information in the form of reports, tables, charts and maps that graphically present information. In 15 years, Business Objects has grown to nearly 4,000 employees with offices worldwide and annual turnover of nearly \$1 billion.

The Challenge

Business Objects noticed that the customer support calls they were receiving tended to require more than one interaction to achieve resolution, especially for large scale, complex analytical models. Complex issues were being resolved by sending out field engineers and support staff to customers’ offices – often flying them out to locations worldwide.

With its promise of high levels of service and customer support, Business Objects faced a tremendous challenge. It needed to accelerate customer support case resolution time in order to free up expert resources to spend more time and attention on complex cases. It also needed to reduce the cost of sending out field engineers abroad while maintaining or increasing service quality in order to meet customer satisfaction goals.

Jeff Jackson, Senior Manager WW Systems and Applications Customer Support, comments, “As our products become more advanced so do our customers’ installations and models. Also many issues are environment or report design specific, which can be difficult to assess over the telephone. Large scale and complex issues could

take 3 to 4 hours on the phone with a customer; step-by-step instructions were prone to human errors, and many customers simply couldn’t identify or report errors accurately, so we needed to do a lot of groundwork.”

The Solution

In October 2002, Business Objects decided to develop a remote support platform using WebEx Support Center. The new platform, called eSupport, allows escalated cases to be handled ‘face-to-face’. “With WebEx we now have direct access to the customer’s desktop and we can properly identify issues in minutes,” explains Jackson.

Although most customer support calls can be resolved quickly and easily using WebEx in a one-to-one meeting, WebEx allows users to create a three-way meeting if a call requires bringing in a QA or R&D expert to attend the sessions with the customer to achieve resolution.

The department now handles over 1,200 WebEx support sessions per month.

Choosing WebEx was pretty straightforward for Business Objects. Although they had already tried other products on the market, the fact that those other solutions needed to install software on the client’s machine was causing customer service issues. “Also, they weren’t truly Web enabled, so firewalls would block it, ports needed to be opened – not very customer friendly,” comments Jackson.

During its evaluation process, Business Objects identified three main criteria: security, a global solution and product integration with other software applications. Jackson explains, “Security is a big issue for our customers and

128 bit security was key. We also needed something that would work worldwide. The WebEx MediaTone™ meant that performance could be maintained wherever we start a session. This allows us to support a case from one office and continue from somewhere else without a drop in service. We also need to work closely with partners. WebEx's list of strategic partners is very similar to our own and this makes it easier for us to promote the use of the product to our customer base. SAP and PeopleSoft are a good examples of this," Jackson adds.

The Benefits

Installation was smooth and was completed within two weeks, including the replication of their Web site onto the WebEx platform. "The 'How do I use WebEx' recorded training sessions were great," says Jackson, "and the attention to detail for our corporate look and feel was very impressive, so we didn't have to go back and rewrite a site."

With eSupport, powered by WebEx, the customer support staff are finally able to 'see' their customers desktops and diagnose problems quickly and accurately. Jackson gives an example, "A German customer logged a support call quoting an error that was not yet recorded in our online knowledge base. After failing to fix this over the phone we realised that the customer's description was not adding up. After connecting using WebEx, we realised that it was a simple problem. A quick update to the environment resolved the issue and the customer was up and running again in less than 10 minutes. We could have spent hours trying to fix this, because the client could not describe the error accurately." Trying to discover the problem could have meant wasting a considerable amount of time, effort, and possibly having to send out an engineer. With WebEx, the issue was discovered and resolved in minutes.

WebEx has been praised throughout the customer support department at Business Objects and has provided a real ROI. The most easily identifiable cost savings is related to travel, "We can safely say that a fully loaded engineering trip costs upwards of €1,000. And that's just when we send them to the US or Canada, you multiple this by three when flying to Asia Pacific. We estimate that we have saved over €80,000 in flights and related costs. This is significant," states Jackson.

Although the cost savings are important, Jackson adds, "It's not just about saving money; it's about customer service. We can't fly QA personnel out to a customer location every time. With WebEx we can bring QA and R&D staff into a call at the 'point of issue' and achieve resolution in minutes versus days. This real-life feedback is also great for our developers and QA staff, and makes our customers happy to see we're pulling out our best team for them when it matters."

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The Future

After having rolled out and used the WebEx platform successfully, the technical support group is showcasing WebEx to the rest of the offices around the world so that all departments, not just customer support, can benefit.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Business Objects needed to accelerate customer support case resolution time in order to free up expert resources.
- Support issues are now resolved in hours rather than days using eSupport which is powered by WebEx Support Center.
- Business Objects has improved customer satisfaction and reduce travel costs considerably.