Cincom

Plantronics

Plantronics Reduces Risk with Cincom CPQ™

Goal:
Implement a compatibility advisor that can handle substantial complex configurations; not for products themselves, but for their interactions with each other.

Challenges:
- Enter a new, emerging market.
- Find a flexible solution that allows the company to adjust quickly as they learn the market.

Solution: Cincom CPQ

Key Results:
- Implemented compatibility advisor for 1,000 phones with plans to expand to 9,000.
- Accepted by internal and external users including sales, customers and channel partners.
- Reduced risk.

"Cincom gave us confidence that we could follow the changes in the unified communications market. It's been a very good experience."

– Sr. IT Analyst, Plantronics

Situation
When Plantronics, a well-known headset manufacturer, decided to enter into the new, emerging market of unified communications, it sought to replace its homegrown compatibility matrix. Compatibility tools, used to configure product options, are necessary to help customers make buying decisions. With risk naturally inherent in entering a new market, it was imperative that Plantronics find a system that offered minimal risk and optimal value; enter Cincom CPQ, an expert knowledge system.

Emerging Market = Quadruple the Complexity

As Plantronics made the strategic decision to move into an emerging new market, the complexity of its compatibility matrix quadrupled.

The senior IT analyst who led the project realized that to succeed in this new, emerging market, Plantronics needed a system that could help them capture substantial complexity while also being nimble enough to change with them as they better understood the market. In other words, they needed an expert, knowledge-based system.

A Different Type of Complexity

Cincom CPQ is successful in helping manufacturers configure various part items into customized products. But for Plantronics, the complexity isn't only in the manufacture of the headset itself; it's in how the headset interacts with different vendor phones, computers, software and other products involved in unified communications.

Cincom CPQ uses constraint knowledge to simplify the many options and alternatives. Constraint knowledge looks at every rule that applies to its products and only allows those choices to be made that don't conflict with any of those choices. For example, compatibility between phone, headset and computer can vary based on connection type, physical characteristics and software versions.

The complexity is magnified by the sheer volume of options. There are currently more than 1,000 phones in Plantronics' system, with plans to expand to 9,000.

Modeling Made Easy

Cincom made the decision easy for the company during a pilot project. "Cincom came up with a prototype," said the senior IT analyst. "It helped us visualize what the tool could do and what we could do with it."

Cincom CPQ is:

- Intuitive
- Easy to understand at a glance
- Based on relationships
- Visually based
- Flexible
- Helpful for figuring out markets and relationships

The senior IT analyst said, "Others seemed spreadsheet-driven, or the data was going to be coming from outside the tool. They didn't seem as intuitive as Cincom's solution."

"People Here See It as Sort of a Panacea"

Plantronics quickly realized that Cincom CPQ had applications far beyond its original intention. "Cincom's solution is like one-stop shopping," said the senior IT analyst. "It could be a front end to any knowledge base.

"People here see it as sort of a panacea," she continued. "Ideas of how to use this are exploding. We have a backlog of lots of engineering and development ideas. If we could move 10 times faster, we couldn't move fast enough."

About Cincom

Since 1968, Cincom's software and services have helped thousands of clients worldwide simplify the management of complex business processes. Cincom serves thousands of clients on six continents including BMW, Boeing, Penn State University, Siemens and Trane.

For more information, send an e-mail to CPQ@cincom.com, or visit the company's website at **www.cincom.com**.

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