

Alcatel Expedites Network Ordering and Configuration Process With Cincom Solution

Goal:

Provide new telecommunications equipment quickly & accurately to Telstra, a key Alcatel customer.

Challenge:

Expedite network ordering and configuration processes.

Solution:

Cincom's Inquiry to Order Management for Complex Manufacturing – an integrated selling solution with product configuration.

Key Results:

- Order-placement and delivery times were cut from eight weeks to less than two.
- A very complex ordering system was simplified.
- All but eliminated order-entry errors.
- The ability to rapidly convert customer business requirements into technical specifications.



Situation:

Alcatel Australia's expertise covers the full communications solution life cycle, including business analysis and modeling, market development, network and systems, architecture, proof-of-concept, network and systems design, planning, deployment, network operations and support.

Alcatel enables carriers, service providers and enterprises to deliver contents to any type of user, anywhere in the world. With sales of EURO 16.5 billion in 2002, Alcatel operates in more than 130 countries, and enables its customers to focus on optimizing their service offerings and revenue streams. The company provides broadband internet solutions, transit exchanges, network management, telephone exchanges, remote integrated multiplexers (RIMs) and Intelligent Network (IN) platforms to a key customer, Telstra.

Developed specifically for day-to-day interactions with Telstra's network planners, Alcatel's new telephone network unit configurator, also known as "ECIC," is an enhanced version of an existing ordering tool that Cincom previously developed for Alcatel. The configuration solution is based on Socrates® software, the engine of an Inquiry to Order Solution designed especially for complex manufacturers, which is distributed worldwide.

An Electronic Customer Information Center (ECIC)

The challenge for Alcatel is to provide, quickly and accurately, new telecommunications equipment to key customer Telstra, at the same time as adhering to thousands of deployment rules and taking into account intricate details of equipment already in place around the country. Fortunately for Alcatel engineers, the configuration process is now a great deal simpler, thanks to the implementation of an advanced online ordering system from Cincom. The software inputs Alcatel customer, Telstra's requirements for end services, and in minutes instead of hours, transforms these into a complete order for parts required to deliver those functions in the network. Now incorporating a database containing past orders and the components with which network sites are already equipped, the tool all but eliminates the potentially costly risk of error.

"The enhanced configurator is an incredibly complex, comprehensive piece of software. It incorporates all the application and deployment rules relative to the network cards, cables and racks that Telstra buys from us for its networks," says Ilana Komonen, Electronic Customer Information Center (ECIC) Project Leader, Alcatel.

"At a high level, Telstra's network planners can define the system they want by outlining how many broadband and narrowband subscribers it must serve, how many customer services are wanted in a particular system or what type of housing or network interface is there," explains Komonen. "Telstra's authorized personnel can do this on a very easy-to-use, multi-tab interface accessed via our intranet. Then the tool very quickly produces the layout of the system required, and the list of the materials and quantities they will need in order to deliver those features in the end network."

Simplifying Complexity in the World of Telecommunications

Tools such as the one produced for Alcatel by Cincom, are a direct result of the increasing complexity of telecommunications networking products and configurations. In the past, fewer cards and cables and one-panel systems meant it was possible to encode design rules in a spreadsheet because they were much simpler.

"These days, Telstra has a thick document of technical deployment rules and we couldn't configure orders manually. Cincom embedded these rules in the ECIC tool so that our engineers do not have to remember them or refer to manuals, which slows down the ordering process. It is also easier to test and obtain feedback on various scenarios using the tool, which was much harder to do from a technical document," says Komonen.

Converting Business Requirements into Technical Specifications

"The Cincom configurator tool is an integral part of the ordering process for Telstra. Without it, the network planners would find it very difficult to convert their business requirements into a technical specifications," added Phillip Lawton, Alcatel's CMUX Program Manager. "The ECIC tool takes all the technical knowledge, which would normally reside in an engineer's brain or in a manual, and puts it into a box so that others without that expert knowledge of the rules can specify product."

Lawton adds, "Telstra is an extremely important customer to us and by providing its network planners with this tool, we are minimizing its business risk in ordering. The tool greatly reduces the chance of errors being made in the first place and it also eliminates the cost of reprocessing incorrect orders."

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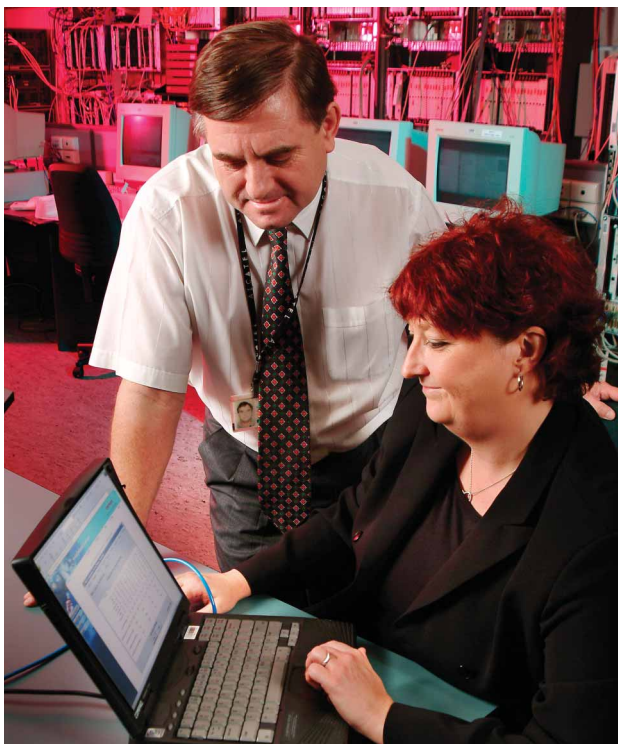
– Phillip Lawton
Alcatel, CMUX Program Manager

Cincom Collaborates With a Key Alcatel Customer

Cincom collaborated with Alcatel engineers to ensure the configurator tool was optimized for the Telstra environment, building in Telstra's design and deployment rules. The Cincom team continues to be involved, as new hardware releases from Alcatel necessitate periodic re-coding, and as Telstra's network planners also provide feedback on using the tool.

"Before implementing Socrates configuration tool, Alcatel's order life cycle – the time required between order placement and order delivery – was averaging eight weeks. The first tool we designed for them reduced that to two weeks and the recent addition of the database will further streamline the process because previous orders are automatically taken into account," said Paul Hargreaves, Managing Director, Cincom. "This is the kind of challenge that complex manufacturers face more and more and we are happy to have assisted Alcatel in transforming a complicated technical process into a very simple ordering system for an important customer."

"The Cincom team provided great support, going out of their way to really understand what we needed. We receive very fast turnaround on investigating any problems or issues. I have worked with them for a number of years and always found them to be great in responding to us," said Lawton.



About Cincom Inquiry to Order and Cincom Manufacturing Business Solutions

Robust yet flexible, Cincom's Inquiry to Order Solution simplifies the most complex selling, while accelerating the sales cycle, broadening sales channels and lowering the cost to sell. Cincom Manufacturing Business Solutions are based on over three decades of experience, providing strategic value to manufacturing companies. During that time, Cincom has provided their customers an evolutionary path through major technological changes, enabling them to keep pace without major disruption to their business. Cincom's knowledge of manufacturing ensures delivery of robust products with rapid implementation resulting in the fastest Return-on-Investment (ROI) and the best customer support in the industry.

About Cincom Systems, Inc.

Cincom is the world's most experienced software company, now spanning five decades with solutions to help customers simplify complex business processes and transform corporate information into competitive advantage. Our software products include manufacturing control systems, contact center and customer relationship management systems, databases, document management, sales knowledge systems and e-business solutions. Cincom serves thousands of clients on six continents including Bertelsmann Music Group (BMG), Citibank, Federal Express, Nationwide, Penn State University and Trane. For more information about Cincom's products and services, visit the company's website at www.cincom.com.



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