

Alliant Energy: Configuring Energy-Efficient Options at Every Turn

Goal:

Help drive the success of Alliant Energy's Six Sigma projects by providing more efficient billing systems and reduced cycle times.

Create a product configuration and quotation management system to produce proposals, contracts and energy options for Alliant Energy customers.

Challenge:

- Eliminate complex multiple billing systems.
- Easily create configurations for new product lines.
- Automatically produce proposals, contracts, and documents.
- Implement an integrated solution that would be easily scalable with existing systems.
- Accurately calculate and report energy conservation information to stakeholders.

Solution:

Cincom's Sales Configuration Management

Key Results:

- The ability to generate documents for customers that detail quantifiable savings/costs.
- Reduced a 30-day billing cycle to three days, resulting in an annual savings of \$200,000.
- Created new, custom products with rapid delivery to the field.
- Streamlined and simplified fleet management business into an unexpected source of revenue.



Background:

Alliant Energy is an energy-services provider, headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin, that serves more than three million customers worldwide. Providing its regulated customers in the Midwest with electricity and natural gas service remains the company's primary focus. Other key business platforms include the international energy market and non-regulated domestic generation. Alliant Energy is a Fortune 1000 company traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol LNT. For more information, visit the company's Web site at www.alliantenergy.com

Objectives: an Accurate, Scalable, Integrated Solution

A primary goal was to drive business by easily and accurately showing customers the cost benefits of Alliant Energy's energy-saving solutions.



One of the first applications to be developed using Cincom's solution focused on the area of secondary or back-up generation for large commercial and industrial customers such as hospitals, factories and schools. These large-scale, non-commodity projects require turnkey, customized solutions to include financing, contractor pricing, internal loading, tax implications and equipment installation for rapid activation. The Cincom Sales Configurator generates financing, product proposals, contracts, documentation and financing models, automatically exporting information directly into the Saratoga Sales Automation system for management, analysis and sales-funnel tracking.

“There were high expectations for the Cincom Solution to deliver, and it did.”

– Chuck Miller, Lead Sales Systems Administrator, Alliant Energy

Striving for Six Sigma

Improving internal processes was key to Alliant's Six Sigma initiative, and the Cincom Quote-to-Order Solution delivered in an area where expectations were high. Alliant Energy was looking for a way to shorten the typical 30-day billing cycle for delivered projects. The prob-

lem was, “We were actually floating money out there for 30 days,” says Chuck Miller, ISA, Information Systems, Alliant Energy. “The customer had the equipment, they were using the equipment, but we had not even generated the invoice.”

Now, the account manager goes into the Cincom configurator, selects “Create invoice – Ready to bill,” and pretty much automatically the invoice is generated. The Cincom solution has enabled Alliant Energy to reduce a 30-day billing cycle down to three! More complex progress billing is also easily handled by the solution. “This single improved process, we estimate, has saved Alliant Energy \$200,000 annually,” says Shelly Zaugg, Sales Systems Administrator.

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Alliant Energy has also applied the power of Cincom's Sales Configurator™ to the agricultural side of their business. At issue was stray voltage in dairy barns with older wiring systems. Stray voltage often generates an electrical shock to the cow during milking and can prevent or reduce the cow's milk production. Using combinations of grants and financing loans, Alliant Energy can now easily show farmers how an upgrade in wiring to their barns can actually produce a cost savings.

Creating, Supporting, and Selling New Products

Alliant Energy is always looking for new, customer-focused products to take to market, and often these products are finance-driven. For example, with Alliant Energy's conservation financing program called “Shared Savings,” the Cincom solution has helped Alliant Energy representatives easily depict and calculate the energy efficiency and cost savings associated with more efficient energy options. The Cincom configuration solution again has created notable efficiencies, streamlining the development and delivery of new products to the field.

Maximizing Capabilities and Uncovering New Revenue Streams

“We are really using the expert system capability of Socrates® (Enterprise Business Rules Environment) well beyond what we ever initially imagined,” says Zaugg. “For example, we have introduced a billing and reminder system in another area of our business – Fleet Management. Now, not only do we maintain our internal fleet, but we service other companies’ fleets,” says Zaugg. We desperately needed to simplify our billing process in this part of the business, and reduce cycle times. Alliant Energy was able to piggyback off the original billing system, and build a section in the configurator for the fleet business. Now Alliant Energy can configure for each vehicle the date of service, what work was performed, labor costs, etc.

Prior to building this application, Alliant Energy had difficulty in tracking costs and billing in a timely manner. Profits can now be recognized, calculated and realized automatically. “We are in the process of expanding the application to include automated maintenance-check alerts for our fleet customers,” according to Zaugg. “This will allow us to project revenue coming into the business.”

Clear Benefits Drive Increasing Internal Demand

“The Cincom system has been so well received that management has had to say, ‘slow down’ to enhancement requests” says Miller. “Since we have had the system, we have always had at least one other project in the queue.”

Clearly the soft savings and labor-saving aspects relating to projects rolled out are enormous, plus the system pretty much takes care of itself. “When we do call Cincom for help, which is not very often, we get a quick response, it is taken care of fast,” according to Zaugg.

Alliant’s Future

So, what is next on the horizon for Alliant Energy? A new application, built with the Cincom Configurator, will be used to calculate costs associated with building wind energy farms – a very specialized business. The solution will eliminate the time-consuming calculations currently being performed on a spreadsheet.

About Cincom

Cincom has been a global leader in the complex manufacturing industry for more than three decades. It develops and delivers business software solutions that help complex manufacturers accelerate operational excellence in a lean manufacturing environment. Cincom begins by identifying and automating complex manufacturers’ most critical business processes, and then streamlines acquisition, production, delivery, and performance processes for solid profit growth.

Cincom offers a wealth of deep domain expertise that ensures a rapid and continuous return-on-investment for its customers, and most of all, a commitment to clients where performance, not just promises, matters most.



UNITED STATES

Atlanta, GA
770-441-0550

Chicago, IL
708-301-6155

Cincinnati, OH
513-612-2300

Columbus, OH
614-863-6636

Dallas, TX
817-571-9117

Irvine, CA
949-752-7220

Kansas City, KS
913-451-6969

Minneapolis, MN
952-470-1920

New York, NY
732-530-1313

Phoenix, AZ
480-775-5168

Pittsburgh, PA
724-242-0158

Santa Clara, CA
408-216-4600

St. Louis, MO
314-995-3800

Syracuse, NY
315-655-2680

CANADA

Mississauga, Ontario
905-279-4220

Montreal, Quebec
514-866-8661

EUROPE

Vienna, Austria
+43 1 24027 524

Brussels, Belgium
+32 2 679 68 11

Lyon, France
+33 4 78 63 78 63

Paris, France
+33 1 53 61 70 00

Schwalbach, Germany
+49 6196 90 03 0

Vianen, The Netherlands
+31 347 358 458

Torino, Italy
+39 011 5154 711

Monaco
+377 93 10 01 20

Barcelona, Spain
+34 93 487 49 57

Madrid, Spain
+34 91 524 9820

Stockholm, Sweden
+46 8 594 605 00

Geneva, Switzerland
+41 22 747 75 18

Lymington, UK
+44 1590 676138

Maidenhead, UK
+44 1628 542300

Manchester, UK
+44 1625 535585

GREATER ASIA PACIFIC

Melbourne, Australia
+61 3 8601 1116

Sydney, Australia
+61 2 8875 1400

Shanghai, China
+86 21 6375 8200

New Delhi, India
+91 11 2373 7590

Tokyo, Japan
+81 3 3438 2791

BRAZIL

Sao Paulo, Brazil
+(55 11) 3097 9555

**LATIN AMERICAN
OPERATIONS**


Cincinnati, OH
513-612-2672

**EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST
AND AFRICA**

Monaco
+377 93 10 01 20

For countries other than
those listed on this page,
contact Cincom World
Headquarters.



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