



Late Night Delivery - a happy ending

The beginning of this story is a familiar one – picture a manager with a good business model frustrated with internal processes and computer systems, only too aware that they are not as efficient as they should be and are beginning to hold his business back. The LockIn is a late night food and drink delivery business servicing London that takes customer orders over the phone and makes deliveries within 20 minutes using its own fleet of vehicles and drivers.

A mix of spreadsheets and manual steps were limiting the volume of orders that could be processed as the business grew. This in turn affected the customer experience – a major problem - and was preventing the expansion plans and aspirations of the business from being realised. In addition there were some regulatory changes in licensing laws scheduled for November 2005 that would increase the number of competitors in the market.

There were a number of issues affecting the business - some limiting growth, and some that they could work around for a while. These were in the areas of efficiency, cost control, delivery tracking, sales order status monitoring, stock management and re-ordering, customer relationship management, workflow and customer service. In addition, the LockIn wanted to know that the solution would be flexible to help future proofing as they grew and wanted more functionality.

As Mr Luke Roberson, managing director, put it: “We had tried to implement an off the shelf point of sale system, but found it inflexible to our specific requirements and too slow in its operation. You can imagine that our staff and customers are not the most patient beings at unsociable hours in the night and early morning!”

“Then a friend in a completely different business recommended that I talk to CubeMatch as they had provided him with a good service.”

CubeMatch had an initial meeting to understand the business objectives and issues experienced in achieving them. Mr Roberson continued: “Before we even saw a computer system or demo, the CubeMatch team conducted a time and motion study on my premises to really get under the skin of our operation and business. This impressed me as other companies used to meet and always demo’d their solution first!!!”

LockIn had put a lot of thought into their requirements, what sort of information they wanted from the system, how it should be displayed and how the overall automated workflow of their organisation should work. In the experience of CubeMatch, most clients are the experts of their own business and know what they need best – CubeMatch concentrate on providing bespoke, tailored solutions and suggestions for their business.

CubeMatch conducted some initial design and presented a proposal to deliver a total solution. A site survey followed with recommendations for infrastructure – we used all the existing components to minimise costs.

Without resident in-house IT capability, The LockIn requested that CubeMatch negotiate, order, install and configure the hardware, servers, printers and networking on its behalf. This promptly happened, requesting several quotations and presenting them for final decision before procurement and installation.

The solution provided was a bespoke development on myCMware-pos. This is a web based business application framework with Open architecture run on Unix, Linux or MS Windows environment. Under the standard LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL and PHP) environment, myCMware-pos enables businesses to grow without incurring enormous costs on software and hardware.

The architecture of myCMware-pos was designed with wireless network connectivity in mind. In the case of the Lockin, wireless and hand held PDAs suit the rough and tumble of a warehouse, food preparation areas and loading bays. Management are able to access the system remotely from their homes and other offices to review progress, shifts, staff and address specific queries.

Design was iterative. The initial prototype was produced and walked through with the client from the outset. This ensured that all parties were on the same page with full client agreement to the look and feel, handling of the system and that the requested functionality could be reviewed as early as possible. “I was impressed with the speed and accuracy of the development”, commented Mr Roberson. “Not only was it produced within a short timescale, but it matched what we had agreed and the new system and screens began to materialise in front of me. It gave me great confidence for the rest of the development.”

Development was conducted in Malaysia with the client in London. The secure remote features for myCMware-pos allows support and deployment to be provided at short notice and at times that do not intrude on business operations.

There is no shortcut when it comes to testing and accepting systems. As consultative ideas and suggestions were taken from each member of staff during design, each had a vested interest in the system and this bred a sense of ownership. As result testing and acceptance went smoothly.

The LockIn goes from strength to strength, is well positioned for the regulatory changes in November and has its own system that they believe give them an edge in this competitive environment. Next release includes a web front end to enhance marketing and capture orders. CubeMatch were pleased to help. “With myCMware-pos, I am happy that I can think of new areas and improvements to my business instead of fire-fighting and living with the frustrations I had. I am opening up two new branches in the New Year and know that I can plug these ventures into my system with the minimum of disruption and cost”. Rather than a happy ending, we at CubeMatch consider it a new beginning.