Customized AppFinity WebCustomer Delivers a Popular Solution

AppFinity's Web-based ordering system increases customer satisfaction and improves staff efficiency and accuracy.

Popular is an industry-leading manufacturer of top-quality giftware, home décor and collectible products based in South Plainfield, NJ. With a worldwide distribution network of over 20,000, the staff at Popular has its hands full keeping track of orders and maintaining its high-quality standard of customer service.

Until a few years ago, Popular conducted business the old-fashioned way — they printed and mailed very expensive catalogs to their wholesale customers and relied heavily on trade shows for exposure and sales. While the company did eventually launch a Web site to showcase its four distinct product lines, the site was for informational purposes only. All orders came in strictly by phone or fax, which made it labor- and time-intensive to complete sales transactions. Input errors were common and the company's customer service reps were spending inordinate amounts of time fielding calls from customers who needed information on a particular item or order.

Fully Integrated E-commerce Solution Needed to Facilitate Ordering Process

In early 2007, Popular general manager Daniel Fong and the company's management team decided that it was time to implement a new e-commerce solution that could fully integrate with their existing Visual AccountMate (VAM) ERP system. The primary objectives were to streamline the ordering process for customers, as well as improve customer service efficiency and accuracy in-house. Their hope was that customers would be able to find all the item and ordering information they needed online, thereby reducing call volume and freeing up staff for other tasks.

Fong called in long-time AccountMate Software business partner Alex Kleyff of AKA Consulting and presented Popular's wish list for the proposed solution. Kleyff immediately contacted Dennis Lo, founder of San Francisco-based AppFinity Software and passed on all the requirements that Fong had listed. Lo, who was an AccountMate co-founder and developer of their software, had designed the AppFinity WebCustomer to integrate seamlessly with VAM. Furthermore, with WebCustomer's fully modifiable architecture, there was no doubt that the application could be customized to fulfill everything on Popular's wish list.

Self-Service Options Designed to Boost Customer Satisfaction

After implementing its WebCustomer solution, AppFinity programmers proceeded to perform a series of modifications designed to make the system more customer-centric and enhance the customer's satisfaction level with Popular. The first order of business was to get the system to support minimum order quantities. AppFinity modified the system to enable customers to view the minimum order quantity for any item before placing an order. If a customer mistakenly orders less than that amount, the system automatically prompts them to enter the correct minimum quantity.

Next, they wanted a Quick Order Form for customers who already know what items and quantities they want. With this feature, customers can skip the conventional item-by-item ordering process and enter all the items they want on one screen. This feature provides major time-savings for customers who already know what they want when it's time to place an order.

Management also wanted to improve communications with its customers, so they asked AppFinity to add a Customer Service E-mail feature so that customers with questions or concerns about their orders can send an e-mail to Popular and receive a rapid response. Finally, AppFinity delivered an enhancement that enables customers to have online access to their order history, including status of a particular shipment or whether an item is currently on backorder.

AppFinity Provides Popular with First-rate Software and Service

With its modified AppFinity WebCustomer up and running for a few months now, Daniel Fong and his staff have high expectations for all the cost and time savings that the company will accrue with the new system. "We've already realized significant gains in employee efficiency and accuracy when processing orders," noted Fong. "The upgraded online system has streamlined the ordering process for our wholesale customers and promises to open up many opportunities for us to expand into new markets. We believe that the improvements will result in more satisfied customers for the long haul."

When speaking of Alex Kleyff, Fong says that "Alex knows our Visual AccountMate system inside-out and he knows what applications integrate best with it, so he was totally prepared to recommend the ideal e-commerce solution for us. He also did a tremendous job of orchestrating the implementation of our new WebCustomer system."

Fong also offered a glowing assessment of AppFinity's ability to design and deliver an e-commerce solution that met their exact specifications. "Dennis Lo and the team at AppFinity went above and beyond expectations in customizing the WebCustomer for Popular. Dennis is a consummate professional who truly understands the meaning of customer service. We were very impressed with the way he listened to our opinions and then quickly made alterations to the system to reflect those views. Dennis and his team showed tremendous flexibility and a desire to give us exactly what we wanted. We're happy with our new e-commerce system and we anticipate adding more functionality down the road."

About AppFinity Software

AppFinity Software Corporation (San Francisco, California) is dedicated to the design, implementation and support of e-commerce solutions that leverage existing technology investments and minimize ongoing IT costs. AppFinity solutions are fully customizable and can integrate with most existing commercial Web sites and today's most popular accounting software systems to deliver complete business solutions that enable companies to focus on their goals without exhausting precious resources on unnecessary IT expenditures. AppFinity is driven by a relentless quest to provide an extraordinary level of customer service that is peerless in today's fast-paced, high-stress business environment. To learn more about AppFinity Software, please visit www.appfinity.com.

About AKA Computer Consulting

AKA Computer Consulting is an independent consulting firm located in the New York City Metro area, servicing the Tri-State area for over ten years. AKA caters to many diverse industries, providing solutions and services to manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, importers and exporters. AKA offers a wide array of services, including integration of software, hardware and communications; general programming and application development; network design, implementation and system integration; Web site development and e-commerce hosting; and Internet access security and solutions. AKA is an authorized dealer and third-party developer of add-on modules and enhancements for AccountMate Software. To learn more about AKA Computer Consulting, please visit www.akaconsulting.com.

About Popular

Popular is a South Plainfield, New Jersey-based manufacturer of top-quality giftware, home décor and collectible products. Established in 1990, the company now ranks among the leaders in the billion-dollar gift industry. Popular maintains distributors in Europe, Asia, North and South America and in Africa. The company has more than 65,000 current customers and employs a robust outside sales force of over 200 covering various territories worldwide. Popular sells its extensive catalog of products only to retailers; however its product is available at many fine gift and retail stores nationwide and abroad. To access the Popular Creations website, please visit www.popularcreations.com.