CASE: THOMSON REUTERS

DELIVERING OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE

THOMSON REUTERS

When Thomson Corporation and Reuters Group PLC merged into Thomson Reuters in April 2008, a Master Data strategy turned out to be crucial to the new company's change programs and to its ability to deliver outstanding customer service.

Richard Beaven is Global Head of Change Programs at Thomson Reuters' Markets Division and in charge of the change programs, which were initiated when Thomson Corporation and Reuters Group PLC merged into Thomson Reuters in April 2008.

- In order to gain benefits from the merger it is an important part of Markets Division's business strategy to have our employees all over the globe feel as a part of one company and to stay innovative, Richard Beaven states.

An equally important part of the business strategy is to deliver outstanding customer service.

- Our customers expect nothing less, as Thomson Reuters is an integral parts of the financial services industry, where our customers depend on our information to trade on the global stock markets, Richard Beaven points out.

A CHALLENGE EMERGES

The merger took place in April 2008, and in May 2008 the Markets Division wanted to send out a letter to all of Thomson Reuters' customers to give them a sense of the new corporation and a possibility to realize how the merger would have value to them.

- This task was supposed to be a rather simple one, but it turned out that Reuters and Thomson had defined 'a customer' in very different ways. Although Thomson was 1/3 the size of Reuters it sent out almost 3 times more customer letters.

This made it obvious to Thomson Reuters, that although both companies offered similar services to the same market, their ways of describing a customer were very different.

- Our different definitions of a customer meant that it was impossible to create a consolidated view of the customers, it was hard to send combined marketing letters, and it was impossible for the sales people to see the combined book of business for customers. The entire organisation was frustrated, as it turned out that data were defined differently across the companies' multiple systems, Richard Beaven explains.

FINDING A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

Realizing that immediate action was required and that both companies had attempted to sort out their issues around customer in the past but without success, Thomson Reuters called on Platon's expertise on Master Data.

- Customer Master Data is incredibly important to our organization, as it is the basis of delivering outstanding customer service.

Improving our Customer Master Data has reduced our costs, improved our business and our customers' experience

Richard Beaven, Head of Change Programs, Thomson Reuters' Markets Division

Thomson Reuters teamed up with Platon, starting with 10 weeks of working within four different phases in order to establish an overview of the current situation, develop a strategy for addressing the issues and provide a roadmap for implementing required changes.

- When we analysed our current situation, we did not dig down into the functions of our organisation, but had a customer end-to-end view, helping us to keep on track.

The initial work with Platon lead to a number of surprising findings:

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- When customers buy our products, we promise to call them in order to find out if they have problems, if they need help or training, if they are aware of all the features and benefits. We had suspected that we might miss a few calls, but it turned out, that in a period of three months we had missed 800 calls due to wrong or missing phone numbers! So what should be easy, as data is feed directly into our Siebel CRM system and delivered to our call center, turned out to be impossible! We found an inadequacy in our organisation to do something as simple as maintaining a telephone number. This made it impossible for us to deliver high quality customer service, says Richard Beaven.

Thomson Reuters found another example of how customer data had an unsatisfying quality:

- We were in the middle of a financial crisis, and Lehman Brothers, one of our customers, went bankrupt. We wanted to reach out to all the company's employees, when they were fired to tell them to take our products with them, even if they were no longer employed. And we wanted to encourage them to continue to use our products, when they were re-employed. But when we checked our customer records, we found that although we knew Lehman Brothers quite well, we did not know the names of the thousands of individual users of our products.

So the more Thomson Reuters worked with their customer data, the more they saw a link between their data the business and the challenges they faced:

- We found that our customer data and its structure were causing substantial issues for our change programs and business operations across the organization. We found that the different approaches to customer data in the former Thomson and the former Reuters were making it difficult for us to run our business efficiently and delivering the customer experience we wanted to be known for. And we found a number of basic problems, including lack of clear accountabilities and an inappropriate way of representing information about our customers in our IT systems, Richard Beaven says.

THE BASIS FOR WORLD CLASS CUSTOMER DATA MANAGEMENT

Supported by Platon, Thomson Reuters addressed different factors in their journey towards world class Customer Data Management

- We worked with six elements of Data Management, which all must have attention in order to create a solid basis for our business:
  - Defining ownership to data
  - Establishing common definitions across the organisation
  - Designing effective business processes and IT systems to secure high quality data
  - Restoring trust in data
  - Maturing corporate culture
  - Controlling change, introducing Master Data principles as corporate policy

REDUCING COSTS – IMPROVING BUSINESS

The work so far has shown Thomson Reuters that Customer Master Data Management is not optional, but crucial.

- Information about Thomson Reuters' customers is a core asset that drives everything we do. It is critical to get the management of this asset right. There is simply no sensible alternative if Thomson Reuters is to become best in class in delivering products and services to our customers, Richard Beaven says.

Handling Customer Master Data right has great impact on the organisation:

- Thomson Reuters has a substantial globally distributed sales and order management operation, getting our data right can drive significant efficiencies. Providing the right, high quality data directly to marketing and to our sales force has noticeably improved our business performance. It's that sort of scale we are talking about.

Besides from cutting costs and improving financial results, Thomson Reuters has moved a big step forward to deliver on its customer promise:

- Although working with Master Data Management is a never-ending journey, we have improved our customer service significantly already, having accelerated the order speed and being able to follow up on customers, improving the experience of our customers, Richard Beaven states.

FACT

Thomson Reuters is the world's leading source of intelligent information for business and professionals. The company's 2008 revenues were US $13.4 billion. Approximately 88% of total revenues derived from electronic products, software and services. Head quartered in New York Thomson Reuters has approximately 50,000 employees in 93 countries.

Thomson Reuters has two divisions: Professional Division delivering information to legal, healthcare, science, and tax & accounting, and Market Division delivering information and products to banks and other financial customers as well as news services to media.