



Timberland trusts eGain

Global manufacturer and distributor of premium outdoor footwear and apparel turns to eGain Mail to help serve expanding customer base

Highlights

- ✓ Email management system implemented in only six weeks.
- ✓ Although email volume has increased at a rate of 30% annually to nearly 1000 inquiries per week, Consumer Service team has maintained an average response time of 24 hours without expanding team.
- ✓ Consumer service efficiency boosted by 300%.
- ✓ Training time reduced by over 90%—from eight hours to 45 minutes.
- ✓ On-demand detailed reports free up one hour per day for team leaders to assist customers and invest in staff.

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Bill Bragger
Consumer Service Manager
Timberland

Company

Timberland is a global leader in the design, engineering, and marketing of premium-quality footwear, apparel, and accessories for consumers who value the outdoors and their time in it. Timberland's dedication to making quality products is matched by the company's commitment to “doing well and doing good”—forging powerful partnerships among employees, consumers, and service partners to transform the communities in which they live and work.

Challenge

Timberland products are sold worldwide through leading department and specialty stores as well as Timberland retail stores. When it set up a web presence, email communications from customers jumped from 0 to 30,000 in the first year.

Like many businesses that have expanded customer contact through the Internet, Timberland started out using a standard application tool (Lotus cc:Mail) to manage email inquiries. As its online business kicked into high gear, it revealed the need to expand response capability and enhance processing speed and accuracy.

Solution

Timberland executives decided that their online business was going to require a world-class electronic eService platform. Consumer Service Manager, Bill Bragger, was tasked with identifying the best solution.

Bragger and his team followed standard procedure. They compiled a wish list of features, canvassed the playing field, and chose a small group of finalists. Ultimately, Timberland chose **eGain® Mail™** to handle its eService needs.

“We had about five or six ‘must have’ features on our wish list,” says Bragger. “We wanted all of our agents to have access to the system. We wanted to eliminate manual cut and paste functions. We wanted to build a customer history file and we wanted robust productivity and reporting tools, like being able to auto-categorize according to email types.”

Because a large part of Timberland's business revolves around wholesale distribution, the company's consumer service needs are more complex than the needs of a traditional retailer. As Bragger explains, this was an important consideration during the search for an eService platform. “We are constantly touching customers through emails and on the website,” he says. “That becomes the reference point for engaging the customer, regardless of the nature of the message.”

For a final evaluation, Timberland brought the competing products in-house, providing its customer service representatives (CSRs) with an opportunity to work with the applications in a real-world environment. “The eGain user interface was clearly the favorite [among the CSR staff],” Bragger says. “The response was overwhelming.”

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Doris Webb
Consumer Service Manager
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Implementation

Timberland chose to implement the on-premise version of eGain® Mail™. They were impressed by the ease with which the system could be brought online. “We thought it might take up to a year to implement a system like this,” Bragger says. “eGain had us up and running in six weeks.”

As for bringing the customer support team up to speed, “Training new agents used to take 8 hours. Now it takes about 45 minutes,” reports Bragger. He cites functional user-friendliness, superior interface design, and processing features as the primary factors behind the quick learning curve.

Results

Doris Webb is one of Timberland’s Consumer Service Team Leaders. She manages 25 customer service representatives (CSRs) who work in the call center at the company’s New Hampshire headquarters. Webb’s team handles from 3,000 to 5,000 emails per month during Timberland’s peak season. “One of the nicest features is the way I can utilize as many customer service representatives as I need, depending on the traffic, and they can answer emails between phone calls,” she says.

Asked whether the eGain solution had met her expectations, Webb replies, “Most definitely. Actually, we respond so quickly; our customers are more likely to reply back and comment on the fast response.” Furthermore, CSRs now blend answering phone calls with email responses because, Webb notes, “I can route particular types of emails to the CSR who has specialized knowledge, and keep track of what happens.”

Webb identified several ways in which Timberland has taken advantage of eGain’s versatile customization options, which include auto-acknowledgments, suggested

responses, and defining routing categories. “We have improved the structure of the information on our website,” she explains. FAQs were posted and the entire site was redesigned to make it more user-friendly.” The site averages around 126,000 user sessions per week.

Asked to rate the eGain system’s user-friendliness from a design and administration standpoint, Webb replies, “The user interface (UI) was very easy to use and rules were easy to create.”

Meanwhile, the number of email inquiries has been holding steady at around a thousand per week. “I’m waiting to see that number really start going up, especially with our expanding product line, which is going to impact the number of customer inquiries.”

Timberland’s expanding international market share was another deciding factor during the search for a comprehensive eService solution. “We’re a global company and most customers outside the U.S. contact us by sending an email,” Webb emphasizes. “With eGain, we can channel those inquiries to specific CSRs who are in charge of handling international issues. It’s really helped us to streamline the way these customers are handled.”

Future

Looking to the future, Webb sees eGain playing a role within other departments including Corporate Communications, Investor Relations, and Marketing. “There’s definitely a lot of potential for using the eGain platform throughout the company,” she asserts.

The partnership with Timberland provides another example of the fulfillment of eGain’s primary mission: Delivering best-of-breed eService solutions to market leaders.

