

Case Study

Agribusiness: Syngenta



Syngenta Germinates Efficient IT Systems with Xcellenet



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the Company

Syngenta is a world leader in agribusiness with \$6.3 billion in sales in 2001. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Syngenta has offices around the world. Syngenta Seeds is one of two main divisions of Syngenta, employing approximately 5,000 people. The seeds division uses the most advanced technology in the seed market to help customers select and purchase the most appropriate seeds for their specific growing conditions.

Business Pain

Seed orders were handled manually. The sales rep would call customer service to place an order for a customer. The customer service representative would then enter the order into the system. This process was time consuming and labor intensive. Additionally, the company needed a reliable, consistent way to manage data.

The Value of the XcelleNet Solution

XcelleNet's solution enables Syngenta to streamline their sales process and to disseminate information more quickly and efficiently to sales representatives in the field. Additionally, the XcelleNet technology enables Syngenta to manage internal data, such as product availability from vendors, and to update pricing information, ensuring Syngenta employees have the latest, most up-to-date information.

Over the past few decades, an increasing percentage of the world's food is grown on an ever-decreasing percentage of land. As world population grows, the demand for high-quality food increases, creating ever-higher standards for farmers world-wide. Syngenta, one of the world-leading agribusiness companies, helps farmers meet these standards by providing crop protection and high value commercial seeds.

Syngenta's 20,000 employees in over 50 countries work to provide a crucial link in protecting the quality and availability of the food supply. The company, with world headquarters in Basel, Switzerland, provides products specifically tailored to meet the specialized needs of farmers all over the world. Formed in 2000, with the merger of two long-standing agribusiness companies, the company traces its roots back to the 1700's to early innovators in agriculture.

The seeds division boasts 5,000 employees worldwide—all working to develop and supply seeds with ever-increasing grower benefits in order to provide high quality foods in bountiful supply. The one thing this company was hungering for was a more efficient means to manage their IT systems, especially their sales process.

Labor Intensive Planting Practices

Scientists at Syngenta spent time perfecting products—the perfect blend of science and nature. Countless hours contributed to developing seeds that would provide customers with the highest yields, the fastest germination times, and the hardiest, most pest-resistant, most disease-resistant seeds for their particular geographical and climatic conditions.

But when it came time for a Sales Representative from Syngenta's seeds division to place an order from the field, the transaction was decidedly low-tech and labor-intensive.

"The sales reps would call in an order and talk with a customer service person. That customer service person would then write the order down. Then the customer service rep would enter the order into the system. It

was all a manual process," says Tom Garite, North American Infrastructure Manager for Syngenta.

In addition to their need for a more automated sales process, they needed a way to ensure a reliable and frequent update of the information to their representatives in the field. Syngenta's customers, the growers, have thousands of choices available to them. Syngenta sales representatives provide a vital link, ensuring growers have access to the up-to-the-minute products most closely tailored to meet their agricultural needs. The company needed a faster more efficient way to process customer orders and provide their customers with the most current information about products.

Seeking Higher Yields

In 1996, Syngenta sought a solution that would streamline their sales process and improve their ability to furnish mobile workers with the most current information. When they discovered XcelleNet's mobile infrastructure solution, they knew they had hit paydirt.

During their search, they had quickly learned that most vendors didn't support their operating system because it wasn't one of those most commonly used. Fortunately, they found that XcelleNet's solution supported a wider range of operating systems than other vendors, including the one Syngenta had in place. Unlike most other vendors, there wasn't a need for a costly customization or changes to their base system.

Syngenta also needed a solution that would work equally well to support their sales representatives in the field and internal users on their LAN. XcelleNet provided a single solution that supports all of the different operating systems at Syngenta, including remote and mobile devices.

XCELLENET™



"(XcelleNet's) product reliability is a huge benefit. It just runs and you don't have to worry about it—you just know it will work."

Tom Garite, Syngenta

Planting on Fertile Soil

After instituting XcelleNet's system, Syngenta found that they were able to streamline their sales process—and do a whole lot more, notably making their sales force automation (SFA) system function more efficiently. The sales representatives began to capture their orders electronically. Those orders are then transferred directly to the SAP group, saving time and money. The manual intervention has been eliminated, making the process more efficient, reliable and cost effective.

Syngenta has reaped the rewards of this versatile and highly adaptable solution. For example, in an effort to most efficiently meet their specialized needs, Syngenta Seeds has employed three different SFA (sales force automation) systems since 1996. With each system, they've found the XcelleNet solution was highly adaptable. Additionally, the solution worked with Syngenta's SAP system as well, without having to create a lot of custom code or hiring outsider vendors to handle a costly and time-consuming integration.

Cross-Pollination and Compatibility

Continual refinements to products at Syngenta make it necessary for sales people to have frequently updated information. Outdated information can make or break a sale. XcelleNet's product allows a system administrator to automatically delete and update files for mobile sales representatives using simple scripting—ensuring a high yield of the right information at the representative's fingertips.

"The conditional logic statements are easy to use. If a file exists, we can append it or back it up—all with the easy to use work objects provided to us by XcelleNet. It's much easier than using Visual Basic scripting," says Tom Garite

From the very beginning, the XcelleNet solution has functioned well with Syngenta's

virtual private network (VPN), allowing the company to continue using existing security policies, thereby protecting crucial trade secrets and proprietary information. Sales people in the field using mobile devices have the latest information fed to their mobile devices, yet private company information is protected.

Providing accurate pricing is equally important. XcelleNet's solution allows the system administrators in the home office to push pricing information so that the mobile sales representatives in the field and the LAN-based customer service representatives can receive the most accurate and up-to-date pricing information at the same time.

In order to meet these widely varied data management needs, XcelleNet's system provides a scripting language that's easy to use. System administrators can perform a myriad of different tasks using the scripting. For example, says Tom Garite, "we use the XcelleNet solution to move SAP data to the SQL database and start loading the data into the database. It adds a whole new level of ease and convenience."

Greater Hardiness

Not only does the XcelleNet solution manage the content and data on remote and LAN users' systems, it automatically updates Syngenta's SFA system. During routine log-ins from the field, the solution takes an inventory of the user's system and automatically makes updates with any new software, updates and files—all without using a tremendous amount of bandwidth. The result is an army of field representatives using the latest approved version of the SFA software with a minimum of inconvenience to the representatives and an elimination of the time-consuming, repetitive task of handling such updates manually.

Improved Pest Resistance

Aside from freeing up the time of system administrators who no longer have to manually update the systems of remote an

LAN users, the XcelleNet solution provides them with the ability to initiate tasks at off-peak hours. For example, with simple scripting, Syngenta system administrators can schedule jobs internally to start up jobs on other servers. Scheduling large jobs at off peak hours enables the company to harness full system resources and avoid work interruptions, saving both time and money. System administrators can schedule the job to run and leave for the night with the confidence that the system will perform reliably.

Additionally, the logging feature adds value by providing a reference for completed jobs and allowing system administrators the opportunity to trouble shoot for bugs.

"After we complete a big job, we use the built-in logging feature to verify that it actually ran. I can't tell you how important that is, because when we're using the solution to distribute a new version of the SFA, we know for sure the users have it," says Tom Garite.

Reaping Rewards

"One of the biggest benefits of using the products from XcelleNet is the ease of use," says Tom Garite. "Everything from file distribution to logging is extremely straightforward; it functions in a logical way so the system administrator doesn't need any special skills to program it.

"(XcelleNet's) product reliability is a huge benefit. It just runs and you don't have to worry about it—you just know it will work," says Garite.

"Whenever we're looking for further system enhancements, expansions or migrations needs, XcelleNet's mobile infrastructure solution is the first place we look because it's so easy to automate."