



IBM Customer Reference

AMARE S.A.

Synopsis:

A small kitchen and bathroom equipment retailer in Switzerland improves efficiency and effectiveness of sales and maintenance teams by integrating its legacy customer database with front-end systems using IBM Lotus Enterprise Integrator software in conjunction with IBM DB2 Connect software

Location:

Geneva, Switzerland

Industry:

Industrial Products

Retail Focus Area:

Customer Relationship Management, e-business infrastructure, Small & Medium Business, Wireless

Customer Background:

Founded in 1958, Amare S.A. is a small retail company in Geneva, Switzerland, that sells and maintains kitchen and bathroom equipment. Amare targets both retail and wholesale outlets with products including sinks, toilets, kitchen equipment and bathroom fixtures. Amare produces both consumer and professional-grade products.

Business Need:

A company with fewer than one hundred employees, Amare has an information technology (IT) infrastructure based on an older model IBM eServer iSeries server running IBM OS/400 Version 4 Release 5 software. The company's legacy system runs under IBM DB2 information management software on the iSeries server. There are no IT specialists on the team.

Amare wanted to improve the speed and effectiveness of its sales and maintenance teams by creating a collaborative environment linked to data stored in the legacy system. The collaborative front end that would be used to push information to the sales people was based on IBM Lotus Notes software. Amare wanted to find the best solution for integrating its front- and backend systems so that everyone in the company could access the same data and deliver consistent information to customers and trading partners.

Amare felt that a unified, collaborative environment would:

- Optimize sales efforts by providing accurate, current customer information to the sales force
- Improve post-sales processes by creating Web-based, self-service options for customers, reducing maintenance requests and telephone inquiries.

Solution:

IBM had been working with Amare for two years, providing IBM Lotus Domino development software for internal business applications and helping build a company Web site. After considering its options, Amare asked IBM to help create a new solution to join its front and backend environments.

Using IBM Lotus Enterprise Integrator software in conjunction with IBM DB2 Connect software, the IBM team linked Amare's legacy system with its IBM Lotus Domino 5.12 system. The existing

DB2 database, selected for its reliability and flexibility, contains customer information that's linked to the sales force agendas in the Lotus Domino system. With the new tool that synchronizes data between the database and the Lotus Domino system, the sales force can access timely customer information integrated with their Lotus Domino calendaring tools.

IBM developed the user interface with the Lotus Domino system for internal Lotus Notes software users as well as for external Web users like customers and trading partners. Internal users access the system using the Lotus Notes client. They can also synchronize some data on their Palm personal digital assistants (PDAs) to remotely access information. The first version of the Amare Web site provides information about the company and its products, aimed at three audiences:

- Anonymous users
- Professionals with restricted access
- Public consumers with restricted access.

The site also has a section for scheduling post-sales activities directly with customers. Approximately 30 internal people are using the new solution.

Benefits of the Solution:

With an integrated database system, the sales force at Amare is more efficient and effective. Now, salespeople can always access up-to-date, accurate customer information, significantly improving sales efforts. With agendas that are linked to the legacy customer database, the sales team saves time with reports and planning efforts as well. After-sales activities have also been streamlined because the post-sales force now places agendas on the Web site so that customers can arrange appointments based on their specific hardware requirements and locations.

No return on investment (ROI) study was done prior to the project, but measurements will be done as soon as the Web site goes live.