Microsoft Customer Solution

Case study

Microsoft CRM

"Microsoft CRM paid for itself in less than a month when you consider increased productivity, increased profitability per transaction, and reduced turn times."

Sam Lloyd
President
AAA Mortgage

AAAmortgage

Microsoft Business Solutions CRM Helps AAA Mortgage Slash Costs, Boost Productivity, and Improve Customer Service

AAA Mortgage, based in Alpharetta, Georgia, sought an open, integrated customer relationship management solution that would help the company streamline the highly paper-based mortgage process, provide up-to-the-minute information to its loan officers and customers, reduce costs, and help enhance the customer experience.

AAA Mortgage implemented Microsoft® Business Solutions CRM®, an easy-to-use, customizable, and scalable front office solution from Microsoft Business Solutions.

As a result, AAA Mortgage is beginning to enjoy the many benefits of this solution, including tight integration with its Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains® back office solution and other custom business modules, easier sharing of information, increased productivity, dramatically reduced costs, and improved levels of customer service.

CUSTOMER PROFILE	BUSINESS SITUATION	SOLUTION	BENEFITS
AAA Mortgage, based in Alpharetta, Georgia, has been a leader in the residential financing business since the early 1990s. The company, with three offices, primarily provides residential loans and home equity lines of credit.	AAA Mortgage sought a CRM solution that could integrate with the company's back office solution and allow easier sharing of information, increased productivity, dramatically reduced costs, and enhanced customer service.	A technology leader, AAA Mortgage implemented Microsoft® Business Solutions CRM®, an easy-to-use, customizable, and scalable front office solution from Microsoft Business Solutions.	▪ Tight integration, allowing up-to-the-minute information to flow seamlessly to everyone who needs it. ▪ Dramatic cost savings through faster loan decision making and processing. ▪ Improved levels of customer service. ▪ Instant information about customers and loan status.

Microsoft®

Situation

Like many other mortgage companies, AAA Mortgage, based in Alpharetta, Georgia, has been riding the crest of a wave of home refinancings and purchases set off by historically low interest rates.

Not content to rest on its success, AAA Mortgage sought a customer relationship management (CRM) solution to add to an already impressive array of technology. The company's primary objective in implementing CRM was to leverage this and other technologies to streamline the mortgage process, which would allow the company to reduce processing times, decrease costs, and provide better service to its mortgage customers.

In addition, AAA Mortgage envisioned CRM as the perfect complement to the company's existing Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains® back office solution. "Our current back office system allows us to make a decision about a loan quickly," explains Sam Lloyd, the company's president. "But what it also does is treat every customer as a loan. As surveys show, that's exactly what a lot of customers feel like—a number."

As an experienced technology veteran—he previously owned a high-technology company—Lloyd knew exactly what he and his company were seeking in a CRM solution.

"Our number-one criterion was, forget what it costs; we're willing to spend what we need for a system we can implement easily with readily available human resources," Lloyd says. "We wanted a web-based solution that provided good functionality that we could easily extend and host in-house. Plus, we wanted it to integrate with our database and be able to leverage existing data—of which there is tons in our industry—so we could mine for the best customers, while all the while

making the customer feel like they're the only one we're talking to."

The solution would also have to integrate closely with the company's back office solutions and other existing technologies. "We run a thin-client, terminal-server-based computing environment and an IP-based telephony system," Lloyd explains. "We wanted this solution to integrate to those systems so we could dial right from the screen, route calls directly to people, and do screen pops—and make sure up-to-the-minute information is available to everyone."

Drawing upon his previous experience in the technology industry, Lloyd knew that rapid adoption of the system would be critical. "I've been involved with lots of CRM projects in different industries," Lloyd says, "and the number-one reason they fail is because of lack of adoption. It's simple: If the salesperson doesn't use it, it's not going to work."

Thus, AAA Mortgage's preferred solution had to be intuitive and easy to use. "Our users don't have a lot of technological understanding—mostly because financial analysts and loan officers for the mortgage industry are not used to making heavy use of technology," Lloyd says. "So we really needed something that was simple and didn't require a three-month training period."

Solution

AAA Mortgage had already evaluated a handful of CRM solutions that had been developed exclusively for mortgage companies. But the company wasn't impressed with the offerings. "They were disappointing," Lloyd says. "They promised a lot, but really delivered nothing. The functionality was less-than-adequate. And they were thought out from a flat, single-point-of-view perspective that wasn't very customer-centric."

Microsoft

AAA Mortgage also evaluated CRM solutions from some of the industry's leading players. However, the company's extensive use of Microsoft technologies made Microsoft Business Solutions CRM the logical choice. "When it came down to it, we had already leveraged a lot of Microsoft technology, and the internal software and customizations we'd developed were all Microsoft-based, so Microsoft CRM seemed like a good fit," Lloyd says.

"This was really a bolt-on application that had good out-of-the-box functionality, well-thought-out lead management, and one that could help us generate any report we wanted," Lloyd says. "At the same time, it was also open enough that we were able to develop our own application—our own loan quoting system—that integrated right with it."

In addition, the platform upon which Microsoft CRM is built—Microsoft .NET—was the only technology that would allow the level of integration and flexibility AAA Mortgage sought.

The time it took AAA Mortgage and its Microsoft Business Solutions partner, I.B.I.S., Inc., based in Norcross, Georgia, to implement Microsoft CRM was remarkably short—only approximately three weeks, Lloyd says. "We spent only a week at the most—and with a limited development staff—developing the solution," Lloyd says. "In fact, most of the rest of the time we spent was on research, gathering requirements and learning the weaknesses and ins and outs of our own systems."

What's more, the cost was far less than AAA Mortgage even envisioned—helping the company earn an almost instant return on investment. "I was hoping to achieve a positive ROI in six- to 12-months," Lloyd says. "But it wasn't even close. Microsoft CRM paid for itself in less than a month when you consider increased productivity, increased profitability per transaction, and reduced turn times."

In fact, Microsoft CRM's cost of ownership has proven to be so low, Lloyd says, "we've literally spent more money on coffee machines and office supplies than we've spent on Microsoft CRM!"

AAA Mortgage is currently using Microsoft CRM to handle virtually every aspect of the customer experience. "We use Microsoft CRM for distributing leads, reporting on their followup, tracking them, prospecting to customers, moving them right on through to account status and then tracking the status on the delivery of the mortgage to them," Lloyd says.

To gauge Microsoft CRM's performance, AAA Mortgage initially rolled out the solution to a control group of just half its salespeople, while allowing the other half to continue using the company's previous systems.

AAA Mortgage's pilot users readily accepted Microsoft CRM. "User acceptance has been excellent," Lloyd reports. "The number-one problem we had was that no one wanted to use it without training. And we had to say, 'look, there's no training necessary. If you know how to use Microsoft Outlook®, this is actually easier.' The next day, everyone was using it."

In fact, on the afternoon of the first day with Microsoft CRM, the pilot team used the system to generate 50 quotes. The next day, the team used it to generate several hundred quotes.

"From a loan officer's perspective, Microsoft CRM makes it incredibly easy to see your leads, to manage them at a glance, and track the tasks you've created on it and need to accomplish," says James Perfilio, the company's sales manager. "And it's great from a management perspective, too. It's web-based, which means the speed is great—and it makes our life easy because

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>
> **Sam Lloyd**
> *President*
> *AAA Mortgage*

Microsoft®

we can get a lot done. It's a complete, 100 percent-awesome customer-relations tool!"

Benefits

Easy Access to Information

Microsoft CRM has dramatically speeded up and streamlined the process of obtaining loan information, which was previously performed manually. "Microsoft CRM plugs right into our back office solution, enabling our salespeople to get the results of a loan decision quickly and on the fly," Lloyd says. In fact, he relates an example of the vast difference between the two processes: "In the past, when a loan officer got a call from a borrower to learn the status of a loan, the loan officer would have to put the caller on hold, then make a phone call, get a fax, or shoot someone an e-mail. Or maybe they'd have to walk across the office to the file room and drill down into a drawer to get the information the borrower needed," Lloyd says.

"Now when someone calls, the loan officer makes small-talk with the borrower while clicking through two screens—and all the information is right there and readily available."

Fast Processing Times and Significantly Reduced Costs

"In the mortgage business, everything's about shaving time off the process," Lloyd says. "For every day we can close a loan sooner, our costs go down, and that translates into instant profit." With Microsoft CRM, the AAA Mortgage pilot team was able to dramatically speed up the rate at which it closed loans. "During the refinancing boom, when everyone and their brother wanted to do a loan, our pilot team was able to do loans an average of 11 days quicker than the standard sales force," Lloyd says. In addition, the pilot team was able to save a whopping $800 per transaction—a huge savings that goes right to AAA Mortgage's bottom line.

Improved Customer Service

A secondary benefit to faster loan processing times is better customer service. "In a highly competitive market, consumers equate time-savings with excellent customer service," Lloyd says. "With a shorter process, borrowers have less time to worry about the most stressful thing they'll ever do—which is taking out a mortgage."

Microsoft

Seamless Integration

Because of its flexibility, not only does Microsoft CRM integrate seamlessly with the company's Microsoft Great Plains back office solution, it also integrates with other software packages—including an intricate proprietary quoting module AAA Mortgage developed. "Quoting systems are very complex, because interest rates are always changing," Lloyd says. "With Microsoft CRM, we were able to take our quoting system, put some new interfaces on it and make it look just like a part of Microsoft CRM."

Increased Productivity

By speeding up processing times, Microsoft CRM has provided AAA Mortgage's loan officers a powerful incentive to search out additional loan customers. "The minute you have salespeople realize they can generate four quotes in the time it used to take to generate one, they start calling customers, pulling reports, generating quotes, you name it," Lloyd says. "Microsoft CRM has really helped boost productivity."

Software and Services

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I.B.I.S., Inc.
Norcross, Georgia

Microsoft Business Solutions offers a wide range of integrated, end-to-end business applications and services designed to help small, mid-market and corporate businesses become more connected with customers, employees, partners and suppliers.

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