

Case study

Global CPG company's digital self service makes paying for its products as enjoyable as consuming them.

Client profile

Multinational consumer packaged goods company

- Manufactures and distributes food and beverages
- Sells direct to retail and through a network of distributors

Overview

In the ultra-competitive consumer packaged goods (CPG) industry, even the most successful companies must stay on their toes. Every aspect of business activity, from product labeling to payment processing, ripples through the organization, affecting both its brand image and its bottom line. That's why a CPG leader jumped on an opportunity to redesign its payment portal to better serve its retailers and distributors and drive a more positive user experience.

Business challenge

As a large manufacturer and distributor of food and beverages, the company sells its products through a multi-channel distribution network. It receives payment after delivery, either directly from retail stores or from its distributors, which supply restaurants, businesses, schools and other non-retail establishments. The company's customers range widely in size and sophistication, but what they all need from their CPG supplier are clearly presented invoices, convenient payment options and efficient ways to resolve any payment disputes.

Aiming to achieve a deeper and richer experience with all its customers while improving its cash flow, the company turned to digital self-service.

In creating the self-service portal, the company's accounts receivable IT team wanted to give even the smallest customers the sense that they were being treated as tier-one customers.



Technology used

- EngageOne® Digital Self Service

After deploying the new customer portal, the CPG company experienced a 25 percent reduction in billing- and payment-related calls. DSO is shrinking, too, with a reduction in payment delinquency.



Solution

In creating the self-service portal, the company's accounts receivable (AR) IT team wanted to give even the smallest businesses the sense that they were being treated as tier-one customers. They wanted the portal to be the epitome of convenience and flexibility, while making it as easy as possible for buyers to fulfill their payment obligations. Deciding to base the portal on proven off-the-shelf software, the IT team selected the Pitney Bowes EngageOne® Digital Self Service solution.

The EngageOne solution comprises a suite of information, invoicing and payment software modules. The CPG company used the EngageOne Smart Bill and EngageOne Smart Pay modules. In addition to the customization capabilities within the EngageOne modules, the IT team took advantage of the software development kit to help create a fully branded user experience.

Distributors and retailers can set up their accounts in the new portal to reflect their retail hierarchy and then provide each of their users with access to the appropriate invoices. They can set up multiple payment options, designate default options and schedule recurring payments to save repeated data entry. The portal also provides access to signed copies of invoices and the associated payments, making it easier for users to reconcile their accounts and request reinvoices, if needed. Accounts update nightly, so the portal reflects the latest payments processed and the daily account balances.

Benefits

After deploying the new customer portal, the CPG company experienced a 25 percent reduction in billing- and payment-related calls. Days sales outstanding (DSO) is shrinking, too, with a reduction in payment delinquency. The company attributes this in part to the portal's role in nudging customers toward desired behaviors. For example, past-due balances now pop up immediately upon login, with a direct link to a payment screen. Past-due amounts are also highlighted on the statements, from which there is also a direct link to the payment screen.

Improving the company's cash flow has not come at the expense of customer satisfaction. Payment options are as easy to modify or cancel as they are to set up. When customers need to dispute a payment, they can log the dispute online, while paying the undisputed portion of the bill. The portal will automatically create a case for the dispute in the company's CRM system and route it to the appropriate team for resolution. As soon as the dispute is resolved, the customer will receive a notification in the portal.

In deploying the new portal, the company knew it was meeting a critical AR need. Still, it didn't anticipate the overwhelmingly positive response it received. Multiple compliments in the feedback section of the portal told the CPG company and its AR IT team they had taken a great leap forward in customer retention, too.

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