

“ Billing is where it all ends – but this project needed to reengineer processes at the front end of the system too. ”

Richard Paul, Finance Director



Background

This major European communications company owns the largest Next Generation Network covering the European Union, from London to Warsaw, from Stockholm to Sicily and beyond into the Continent's emerging economies. The network links to telecoms hubs in North America, the Middle East and Africa. Supported by 55,000 kilometres of fibre, 21 metropolitan area networks, 8 data centres and 32 colocation centres with local operations in the 26 largest cities of Europe, and serves customers in the 15 major languages of the European Union.

Business Issue

The existing billing system was not fit for purpose. Standard functionality such as formatting invoices was not available, there was no support for international billing requirements, e.g. multiple currencies and tax rates, there was no access to the underlying data and a lack of integration with other business systems, and critically there was no longer a commitment from the incumbent vendor to support the system. These issues meant customers were not being billed in an accurate or timely manner.

The Challenge

Our client needed a new 'fit-for-purpose' billing system to simplify and align business processes, produce customer bills and reduce the cost of this essential function. The system needed to be integrated with other key business systems; support a direct interface with contract data held in Siebel CRM, with full data validation to eliminate re-keying and resolve data integrity issues; provide full functionality such as data conversion, formatting of invoices and mass inputting of data; generate accurate, 'right first time' invoices; eliminate at least 50% of credit notes; support multinational billing requirements such as local currencies and tax rates; be properly aligned with business processes; and, crucially, have a lower cost of ownership.

Solution

After a detailed business analysis phase, Oracle Receivables was selected as the platform for the new billing system. DB Consulting was chosen to deliver the project.

We fast-tracked the implementation, following a streamlined implementation method. Key phases included: data cleansing and validation, kicked off in parallel with the build phase and driven through a repeated cycle of run-compare-repair to resolve all data issues prior to data migration; development of interfaces with other core business systems including Siebel CRM to ensure the availability of correct, up-to-date contract data; evaluation and selection of a 'match-and-rate' engine to process usage charges, 'black boxed' from the rest of the system to allow a switch to a more powerful engine at a future date if business growth dictates this is required; and integration with the existing revenue reporting system. Receivables distribution functionality enables data rollup for reporting purposes.

Invoices are automatically generated using BI Publisher, with an e-billing option for those customers wishing to receive their invoices directly. A 'billing trigger' was specially developed to create instructions for recurring bills.

Results

The new billing system is significantly more efficient, and has eliminated manual re-keying of data, duplicated setting up of new customers and most of the billing errors which required credit notes to be issued. The improvement in data quality in the Siebel CRM backbone, the establishment of a single unified data set for billing and revenue reporting, business process simplification and a reduction in the number of systems required to support the end-to-end billing process have together delivered a substantially reduced total cost of ownership.

DB Consulting

DB Consulting works with ambitious, forward-thinking companies aiming to achieve strategic business objectives through the deployment of modern Information Systems.

We design, build and support software for companies operating in a wide range of industries, using technology products from Microsoft, Oracle, IBM and other leading software vendors.

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