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Oracle Portal Case Study

MFG Systems' Builds an Innovative Customer Portal for Hamamatsu USA

Challenge

Hamamatsu's business revolves around the orders placed by their customers, either directly or through a dedicated sales representative. In the past, determining the status of an order or determining inventory levels was a time consuming process that required dedicated customer support representatives.

To facilitate direct access to this information by both customers and sales representatives, Hamamatsu focused on a solution to provide a secure portal application that was easily accessible via the internet. The portal site had to be easy to use and provide on-line help whenever necessary. Security was a key requirement since customers and sales representative could only have access to their own information. Another key component of the application was the ability to examine the delivery schedule and track the order using the UPS tracking number.

The solution would also have to integrate with Hamamatsu's existing, and highly successful, ERP application that was built on an Oracle8i database running Oracle Forms and Reports 6i in client server mode. To accomplish this, a new security layer would have to be built since the existing application did not support customer access and had no security for sales representatives.

Solution

Due to MFG Systems proven track record in providing Oracle solutions and support services, Hamamatsu contacted MFG Systems for a solution. MFG determined that an Oracle Portal application built on top of the existing 9i Application Server (9iAS) architecture met all the requirements for the application. The original solution, which was built and deployed using Oracle 9iAS Release 1 has recently been upgraded and redeployed on Oracle 9iAS Portal Release 2.

The Hamamatsu Customer Portal made use of a number of key features of 9iAS Portal to ensure the success of the project.

Customers and sales representatives were able to run existing Oracle Reports to check on the status of orders and inventory. Users were also able to search orders using different criteria. The results of the searches can then be used to drill down into the orders to view additional information such as Shipment History, Delivery Schedules and Product Data Sheets. Integration with the UPS website enabled users to click on the UPS tracking number for an order and display the current status and location of a shipped item.

Security for the Customer portal was provided through several mechanisms. Portal security was used to secure various tabs and components of the application to allow each user to only access authorized areas of the portal. MFG also added an advanced security layer to the application using the Virtual Private Database (VPD) facility available in Oracle 8i and 9i to restrict a customer and a sales representative to only viewing their own data. Finally, the transmission of portal data using SSL allowed for secured transmission of the data.

Outcome

The implementation of Hamamatsu's Customer portal was an immediate success. There was a significant reduction in the number of calls made by both the sales representatives in the field and customers to customer service personnel located at headquarters. The sales staff has also been able to use the information from the Portal site to prepare for customer visits. Providing customers the ability to search and track their orders has resulted in much higher customer satisfaction. Customers now have the ability to track their orders from the time the order is placed until the order is received.

"The release of Oracle Portal coincided with our need to provide data to remote internal users and external customers. MFG provided a solution that is user friendly, fast and easy to manage."

—Director of Management Information Systems, Hamamatsu USA