

CASE STUDY AIRTRICITY

FUJITSU RE-ALIGNS CRITICAL PROCESSES TO SUPPORT BUSINESS GROWTH

»FUJITSU HELPED TO DEFINE A CLEAR STRATEGY AND PINPOINT THE MOST APPROPRIATE VENDORS WITHIN THE MARKET. WE NOW HAVE A ROBUST AND ADAPTABLE SOLUTION IN PLACE THAT MEETS OUR NEEDS ENTIRELY. «

LIAM O’RIAIN, IT OPERATIONS MANAGER, AIRTRICITY



CHALLENGE

Airtricity is Ireland’s largest independent energy utility, supplying over 250,000 customers and on target to supply over half a million customers by 2013. Ranked Ireland’s Most Reputable Energy Company, Airtricity is a wholly-owned division of the FTSE 100-listed SSE (Scottish and Southern Energy plc) Group, the broadest-based utility in Ireland and the UK.

Airtricity has been recognised as the leading greener energy supplier in Ireland, winning the Green Energy Award in 2010 for the second year running, and is ranked the Most Reputable Energy Company in Ireland in the 2010 Ireland RepTrak Study.

Following deregulation of the electricity market in the Republic of Ireland, the state-owned Electricity Supply Board (ESB) consulted with market participants. This process generated 25 standard market procedures and 88 stock electronic files for data exchange. With an immovable market opening date looming, participating in this newly structured market presented Airtricity with a significant challenge; to re-align mission-critical business processes and legacy systems rapidly.

Liam O’Riain, IT Operations Manager, Airtricity, comments: *“Deregulation of the electricity markets in the Republic of Ireland represented both a significant opportunity and a major challenge to Airtricity. This initiative denoted a major business change from loosely defined, semi-automated business-to-business processes to fully automated, highly structured transaction processes.”*

After identifying this requirement, Airtricity also ascertained a need for a comprehensive customer communication solution across the credit control, customer billing, customer care, registration, and sales and marketing functions. Staff were spending far too long producing, printing and re-printing bills, letters and credit control items instead of focussing on the core billing process. To support future business growth, Airtricity required a robust and scalable solution that integrated seamlessly with its existing Customer Information Solution (CIS).

Consequently, the company created a new CIS project and decided to use a third party to manage the service. With bills, letters and credit control items in an XML format, Airtricity had to find a vendor that could translate this data into meaningful information, which would facilitate the automatic production of the aforementioned items. Moreover, the data had to be in PDF format, allowing customers to view bills via the company’s online service.

MARKET OPENING SOLUTION

To re-align mission-critical business processes and legacy systems ready for the deregulated market, Airtricity initiated a Market Opening

THE CUSTOMER

- Airtricity is Ireland’s largest independent energy utility, supplying gas and electricity to over 250,000 customers
- Operates 22 wind farms in Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland generating 440MW of renewable electricity
- Winner of 2010 Green Energy Award and ranked Ireland’s Most Reputable Energy Company



THE CHALLENGE

- Rapid realignment of mission-critical business processes and legacy systems prior to market deregulation
- Create a new Customer Information Solution (CIS) to support future business growth

THE SOLUTION

- Initiated a market opening programme in response to deregulation.
- Developed improved systems and processes
- Managed services for a customer communication solution

THE BENEFITS

- **MARKET ENTRY** – the company entered the newly deregulated electricity market in ROI on time and now competes effectively
- **FULLY INTEGRATED CIS** – a robust and scalable system supports future business growth
- **BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT** – automated production of bills, letters and credit control items ensures staff concentrate on the core billing process, increasing productivity and generating cost savings
- **KNOWLEDGEABLE BILLING PARTNER** – aids the introduction of the system to other Airtricity sites worldwide, further enhancing productivity
- **ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY** – viewing bills online reduces paper waste, reinforcing the company’s ‘green’ credentials

Programme. The company chose Fujitsu to lead the analysis, design, implementation and delivery of the re-engineered processes. To ensure formal certification of the solution within the new market, it also asked Fujitsu to integrate all IT applications.

Fujitsu and Airtricity worked together to ensure that existing systems were modified to suit the changed market. To minimise costs, they simultaneously implemented new layers of business and application logic to maximise re-use.

Initially, Fujitsu documented the company's internal service delivery processes and mapped them against the new processes created by market deregulation. Although Airtricity staff were unfamiliar with the process changes, Fujitsu provided a system to deliver processes to employees in a recognisable format. Airtricity therefore made considerable cost savings because staff did not require re-training.

Moreover, to integrate future solutions, Fujitsu designed and built additional interfaces for the legacy systems. It then created a data repository for Airtricity's customer data and migrated coding information to match the changes defined centrally by the market deregulation programme.

On the training front, Fujitsu assessed the needs, developed plans, created custom-build material and, subsequently, managed and delivered a training programme for Airtricity's operational staff.

Fujitsu successfully planned and managed the entire programme in conjunction with Airtricity staff, billing vendors and two other consultancy firms.

"For Airtricity, flexibility from our supplier is key and, at all times, Fujitsu shared ownership for delivery of this key business transition, helping to rapidly build and deploy a mixed team of business and IT specialists to react to market change," continues Liam O'Riain.

CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION SOLUTION

"We have partnered with Fujitsu in the past on a number of projects, so it knows our company well. We are very happy with the level of service we received. This is the primary reason why we chose Fujitsu to help us find the best vendor," explains Liam O'Riain.

The process commenced with a comprehensive requirements gathering exercise, which included a cost benefit analysis and impact assessment to compare an in-house solution with a third party solution. The next step involved vendor selection for printing and XML output translation, defining bills, letters, credit control item needs and describing the appropriate business rules associated with billing. Finally, Fujitsu considered bill and stationery design, project management of printers handling the new bill printing system, PDF production for online viewing by customers, and the creation of emails informing customers that they could inspect bills online.

Fujitsu then wrote the tender document, took responses from various vendors and recommended the most suitable candidate for the customer communication solution to Airtricity. In addition, Fujitsu assisted Airtricity with commercial negotiations to strike the best deal with the chosen vendor.

"Timing was everything for us in this project. With many deadlines in place, to fall behind on one could mean we would fall behind on the entire project. Fujitsu did not fail us here. Deadlines were met with ease and it implemented the entire solution over a five month period," states Liam O'Riain.

IMPACT

Airtricity entered the deregulated market on time because Fujitsu deployed the market opening solution successfully to a fixed delivery deadline. Following implementation, Airtricity retains its existing systems whilst overcoming a critical change in the marketplace. An alternative approach, upgrading the legacy systems, would have had a limited effect on business processes and would have been more expensive. Consequently, the company is no longer tied to its legacy systems.

The solution also benefits from automation of the previous manual processing system, delivering enhanced data integrity and accuracy. Furthermore, Airtricity retains full control of its future infrastructure. These benefits are primarily due to Fujitsu using an open standards-based architecture.

Today, Airtricity also has a robust and scalable customer communication solution that supports future business growth. A fully integrated CIS operates across the credit control, customer billing, customer care, registration, and sales and marketing functions. Accordingly, fully automated production of bills, letters and credit control items has improved business processes, increased productivity and generated cost savings. Staff now concentrate on more important work such as the core billing process.

"Fujitsu helped us to define a clear strategy and pinpoint the most appropriate vendors within the market. We now have a robust and adaptable solution in place that meets our needs," says Liam O'Riain.

The customer communication solution has improved customer service levels too; it deals with more transactions. In addition, a knowledgeable billing partner will help Airtricity to introduce the system to other offices worldwide, delivering further efficiencies and cost savings.

EXPERTISE

With over 40 years' experience of supporting the needs of the public sector and businesses around the world, Fujitsu has a proven track record in complex systems integration and application development. Moreover, its management services reduce costs, improve productivity, enhance customer service and deliver a compelling return on investment.

Fujitsu worked with Airtricity to blend the past with the future. It provided continuity and support during a time of immense business change whilst adding value to new initiatives, helping Airtricity move forward in the dynamic energy supply and utility market.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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