

CQ University

Consona Knowledge Driven Support

Funding cuts forced CQ University to find ways to deliver education to more students at lower cost. Service-centric CRM is key to that effort.

CQ University recouped its investment in integrated case and knowledge management in just nine months, while leveraging superior customer service to lead the drive into new markets and new sources of revenue. Logging 26,000 student cases in first six months, self-service deflection rates are up from 39 percent at the start to 70 percent six months later, all while saving money and supporting growth and greater satisfaction.

Time to Change

Three-quarters of CQ University's 22,000 students take courses and earn their degrees and certificates through distance learning. It wasn't always that way. Over the past several years, funding for the country's universities, including Central Queensland University (re-branded as CQ University), was drastically cut. Rather than scale back on programs and services, CQ University decided to develop new sources of revenue while at the same time cutting costs wherever it could. "We had to become very frugal," said Bill Gonch, manager of CQ University's web and academic systems group.

Expansion into distance and international education was central to CQ University's quest for new sources of revenue. Only one-quarter of today's students takes courses at the main campus in Rockhampton, Queensland and the other five Queensland campus locations. Another one-quarter takes advantage of distance learning opportunities in Queensland. The remaining half are international students, primarily from India and China, who complete their studies through international campuses in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, and the Gold Coast.

CRM at the Forefront

When the funding cuts came down, and the university considered its options, there was a strong commitment to redirect the institution to build an international presence and tap the market for quality education in Asia.

Equally important, the university realized the need to reduce the cost of operations while maintaining and enhancing customer service. The university had no CRM in place, but recognized the need for such technology to achieve its goals. The first order of business was to assemble a team to look at the business processes. The team quickly determined there were 11 separate groups providing customer service, all across the university. It was immediately clear that service could be improved at reduced cost by centralizing customer service under the appropriate technology. An organizational change proposal was submitted to the university board and the technology search began.

As the university team looked at 11 different vendors and products, "Consona quickly jumped to the top of the pack," Gonch said, offering the functionality the university needed. The team was particularly impressed with the solution's integrated CRM and knowledge management functionality, as well as the system's ability to integrate—through web services and an open architecture—with the many other applications already in use throughout the university. "Consona offered us the opportunity to realize our vision of knowledge-centered service for our students," Gonch said. "We realize that students have a lot of other choices, so we have to offer good service and we also have to keep our costs and prices low."



Return on Investment at a Glance:

CQ University has been able to achieve the following results after its implementation of Consona CRM:

- Increased customer satisfaction, as evidenced by focus group comments.
- A 70 percent deflection rate of student cases via online self-service.
- Reduced costs – enough to pay back purchase and implementation costs in nine months.
- A fully functioning student and prospect self-service facility and service representative knowledge base with disciplined expansion and quality improvement processes in place.
- The reorientation of CQ University from a regional university to a major international distance-learning facility serving India, China and the rest of Asia with quality education opportunities at competitive prices.

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— **Bill Gonch**, Manager, Web and Academic Systems Group, CQ University

CQ University was also impressed at how well the Consona solutions support KCS – the Knowledge-Centered SupportSM methodology. KCS, developed by the non-profit Consortium for Service Innovation, specifies a set of procedures and practices to capture, structure and re-use knowledge as a key asset for customer-oriented organizations. “KCS is an important idea for us,” Gonch said, “and we believe that Consona’s implementation of KCS is excellent. That was a factor in our decision to choose Consona.”

Navigate CQU

After an impressively short four-month implementation, the system went live in October 2008. The student service center (counseling), contact center, and business center are now consolidated under the “Navigate CQU” banner. Currently, there are 98 staff users on the system with plans to expand that to 120 in the near future. In the first six months of operation, the system logged 26,000 student cases.

“The challenge is how to manage the knowledge that resides within the organization,” Gonch said. The team is constantly looking for better ways to organize knowledge. The strategy at first was to just get as much knowledge into the system as was practical, and then use analytics to refine the content and point to the right directions for expansion. Knowledge is created and captured by the people working at the business center and in the contact center, as they pursue their day-to-day activities. “When an agent is working on a case,” Gonch explained, “he or she has access to the full Consona knowledge management toolset.” Answers from the knowledge base are readily available for insertion as a call center agent develops e-mail based resolutions for students. Every new question or unique answer that is authored is captured and put into the knowledge base, which contains unique algorithms that make the knowledge more relevant and accurate as it is used. Also, newly-authored knowledge is automatically work-flowed to appropriate managers for review.

Every two weeks, the team uses a knowledge gap tool to identify how students are using the knowledge base and what they might be looking for that is not in the system. As a dividend, this process helps identify courses that the university does not yet offer and courses that are offered but may be described differently. In the latter case, the definition can be expanded by adding new terminology or adjusting the synonyms so future inquiries will be more successful. The team reviews the top 50 items with highest scores on the gap analysis in each review. The ultimate goal is to make self-service more effective and useful for the visitors.

“Case management is the source of the knowledge we are capturing and managing in our knowledge base,” Gonch said, “and in turn, the knowledge base contributes greatly to our success in case management. There is a very pleasing synergy at work through the integration of these two solutions. Each part of our efforts enhances the effectiveness of the other.”

Significant progress is already evident in the deflection rate, or the percentage of inquiries that are satisfied by the self-service function and do not require the visitor to call. At first, that deflection rate was 39 percent; six months later, it rose to 70 percent, which suggests that more students are getting answers immediately and the university is spending less on resources to provide this high level of service. This discipline is now being rolled out to the university’s internal help desk in an effort to raise its deflection rate to the same level or higher.

And there’s more good news. After consolidating all customer service functions into the centralized CRM and knowledge management system, CQ University requires reduced staff to provide even better service than previously. In fact, the savings were enough to recapture the cost of the system and its implementation in just nine months. This demonstrated success and value was enough to justify a request for additional funding for expansion.

“It is very difficult to do both improved customer service and reduced costs at the same time. We were able to achieve this with integrated case and knowledge management from Consona CRM.”

— **Bill Gonch**,
Manager, Web and
Academic Systems Group
CQ University

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More to Come

Based on the measures cited above and comments from web-based focus groups of students and prospects (they think the system is “tremendous”), CQ university is continuing to expand its use of the system to include more of the school’s departments. Expansion is planned in the following areas:

- **Student library** – handling requests for reference materials through a ‘virtual library.’
- **Marketing** – reaching out to prospective students around the world.
- **Office of development and graduate department** – better relationship management and communication.
- **Corporate communications** – helping facilitate public relations and community engagement.

The project’s objectives were twofold: maintain or improve customer service and at the same time reduce costs. “It is very difficult to do both of these at the same time,” Gonch said. But CQ University has demonstrated that the best way to achieve this was through self-service. “Having quick and easy access to answers is a positive customer experience,” Gonch said. “Self-service is the best and the most economical way to deliver this level of service.”

Now that students and prospects are enjoying the benefits of knowledge-driven customer service and self-service, the faculty is next in line for inclusion in the system. The team is currently defining the kinds of service that can be offered to faculty and staff and how to build organizational knowledge to support their needs. After that, CQ University will be looking at how it can better service the large network of international agencies that handle a great deal of the school’s recruitment effort throughout Asia. They’re not sure exactly how they’ll do it, but the team is confident that Consona CRM will play a key role in creating higher satisfaction with the agents.

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Consona’s CRM software product suite facilitates effective and efficient service interactions across proactive, assisted and self-help channels and communities. The only CRM vendor focused entirely on service and support—with a comprehensive, integrated point solution mix and the expertise to match, Consona CRM helps medium to large enterprises with customer service, technical support and/or IT help desk operations balance today’s issues with tomorrow’s requirements.

CQ University Uses Consona Knowledge Driven Support From Consona CRM

- The industry's first coupling of case tracking and patented, self-learning knowledge management.
- Capture knowledge while solving a case, automating it for next time.
- Achieve best practice objectives, unifying, guiding and measuring every agent on every channel.

Knowledge Driven Support: The First and Only KCS VerifiedSM v4 Whole Solution.

Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS) is a best practice for knowledge management that has been used by some of the most successful companies in the world to increase support center capacity, shorten ramp-up time for new staff, and improve customer self-service. With KCS, every customer contact is an opportunity to capture, reuse, and improve the organization's key asset: knowledge.

By integrating knowledge management into the service delivery workflow, KCS delivers its benefits without adding extra time to case resolution, and without adding after-call work. But, KCS can only deliver on this promise when it's fully supported by technology that is as well integrated as the KCS processes. Inspired by KCS, Consona Knowledge Driven Support is one of the first products that successfully completed the rigorous KCS *Verified* 4.0 certification, granted by the Consortium for Service Innovation only to products that have demonstrated full support of the KCS practices.

Whether an organization chooses to fully adopt KCS, or whether it informally takes advantage of some of its proven practices such as the "use it, flag it, or fix it" model for continual knowledge quality improvement, KCS provides a palette of powerful techniques for capturing, improving, and taking advantage of knowledge in the course of resolving customer issues. By selecting a product that is KCS *Verified* 4.0, support organizations can be sure that they will have the technology they need to implement the process they want.

Consona Knowledge Driven Support: What You Get

- Multi-channel
- Consistent knowledge
- Personal delivery
- Smart processes
- Analyze EVERYTHING

Consona CRM

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