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US Home Systems Gets an Extreme Makeover with SystemLink

U.S. Home Systems, Inc. manufactures, procures, designs, sells and installs custom home improvement products. The company’s home improvement products are exclusively marketed directly to consumers through the nationally recognized brand of The Home Depot Kitchen and Bathroom Re-facing and The Home Depot Installed Decks. US Home Systems’ products include replacement kitchen cabinetry, kitchen cabinet re-facing, countertop products, bathroom re-facing and related products utilized in bathroom remodeling, wood decks and related accessories. They are located in 42 of the largest cities in the United States and are one of the few remodeling companies that are truly a national provider.

Phase I – Facing the Facts

As US Home Systems grew with Home Depot, they realized that the excellence in manufacturing and sales that they were known for was going to need to be matched with understanding their customers and insuring customer satisfaction. US Home Systems had the people to do the job, but they lacked the ability to quickly get information out to the people responsible for customer service. Their current Legacy system was based on the PICK operating system and it did not have a modern user interface nor did it support many of the java or Microsoft web messaging or web services. Also, with the new requirements promulgated by the Sarbaines Oxley Act (SOX) the legacy system was not compliant and needed to be changed. “Our system was old, internally developed and needed to be modernized. We wanted a system that would allow us to better understand our customer relationships and how to satisfy them.” states Bill Dean, CIO for US Home Systems.

Two areas that US Home Systems wanted to improve upon were reducing cycle time and efficient project management. “Cycle time, the time that elapses between taking an order and completing an installation is extremely important to us and our customers.” states Dean. “It is one of the metrics that we use to measure how well we are completing jobs.” Dean stated “Our problems occurred after the point of sale. In order to reduce cycle time we needed to manage the project with more oversight so that issues that came up in installation were easily identified and quickly solved.”

Back in 2001 US Home Systems had began their “end- to-end” solution quest by engaging SystemLink to install Sage Accpac ERP. It was through this installation that the relationship between US Home Systems and SystemLink grew. “We consider SystemLink to be our integration partner, and when we were facing these challenges we automatically called them for help.” recalls Dean. “After a thorough research process we arrived at SageCRM and felt that this was the best product to meet our needs.”

Phase II – Out with the Old and In(tegrate) with the New

US Home Systems went through an extensive research program to identify the best solution for their needs. They built and tested two different prototypes in their office, before taking a decision. “The ability to test a product in our own environment was invaluable to our decision making process. It allowed us to see how it worked and what its limitations were,” states Dean. “Not only did SystemLink allow us to prototype SageCRM, we were also able to learn how it worked behind the scenes as it was a hosted version that we were testing. It was obvious that SageCRM was the best choice due to the ease of workflow, business intelligence tools available and the fact that it already integrated with Sage Accpac ERP.

The implementation went longer than expected because US Home Systems chose to install it themselves. “I wanted our internal folks to install it so we could learn it and be able to work with it in the future,” according to Dean. “SystemLink partnered with us during the installation and provided valuable direction on how to integrate this new system into the current Sage Accpac ERP system that we had. They answered a lot of ‘what if’ questions for and gave us huge insight on how to make the system best work for our needs.”

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“The fact that this system was a commercially available, off-the-shelf product was a benefit to US Home Systems as it did not have any of the ‘home grown’ legacy system challenges,” according to Dave Beck, President of SystemLink. “We were able to recreate the information from the legacy system, create a new bill of materials and make multiple other customizations to make this a complete program.”

SystemLink configured the system so that US Home Systems would be able to process work flow from CRM into an order in Accpac Project Job Cost. Together, SystemLink and US Home Systems penciled out how the project should flow and SystemLink configured the integration from CRM into an order that is now processed in the Accpac ERP project and job cost module. “What continues to pleasantly surprise me is the knowledge the SystemLink team has of our business and the value they add to our team,” says Dean. “They make suggestions and offer alternatives rather than just saying ‘yes’ to whatever we think is the best solution. Whenever we have a question or a need, they consistently drop what they are doing and always know where they left off with us. I know we are not their only client, but they make us feel like we are.”

Phase III – Eye Catching Results

Some unintended benefits of installing this system were gained after they began the installation. “I don’t think we realized when we licensed SageCRM the rich workflow development environment that came with it. After we started to use it we began to see that this was the workflow platform we were looking for to migrate completely out of the legacy system we were using,” states Dean. SageCRM comes with “state-of-the-art” workflow, which allowed US Home Systems to modify the pages and create a new user interface. “In the legacy system there was no way for us to know if a job was late or was having problems,” according to Dean. “With SageCRM we are able to alert our staff if a project is overdue which empowers us to manage the project more efficiently. CRM has enabled us to take the human element out of the equation, which has improved our cycle time and the overall management has been provided by CRM. Since the implementation of SageCRM with Sage Accpac ERP we have reduced cycle times by 20%. This system has also allowed us to tap into the smaller markets, maintaining the same level of quality without as many people ultimately; increasing revenue and profitability.”

US Home Systems’ Customer Care department is extremely satisfied with this new system too. “They are the ones who asked for the new system, and are getting the calls from our customers,” states Dean. SageCRM is now tying all of the data from a job together. It allows all 42 branches to access all sales, engineering and installation paperwork in one area. In the past when one of US Home Systems’ customers had a concern or needed service the customer care agent was not able to provide an adequate answer due to lack of information. Now they have all the notes from the job at their fingertips. They can make notes, notify their team on service needed and give educated responses in a timely manner. “CRM enabled us to provide a much better, more efficient service because the information is right there for them to see.” states Dean. “US Home Systems IT team is also pleased with the system due to the ability they have to customize it to their needs. The application is really leading edge in terms of actual code of the software. It’s modern technology and not old legacy code. That gets our IT guys excited,” according to David Beck

“If you think about it, our company represents multiple industries. We are in the construction and manufacturing field as well as the retail and service industry. Our workflow is truly unique when we look at how we take orders, develop requirements, job status, etc.” states Dean. “The fact that we can take SageCRM and integrate it with Sage Accpac ERP and use it for our unique needs is truly amazing.”

“US Home Systems is a very large and complex organization. Being able to first integrate their legacy system with Accpac ERP and then replace the legacy system with the integrated SageCRM is a testament to how Sage mid-market products can serve the upper tier of mid-market or SMB’s.” states David Beck. “We were pleased that US Home Systems was able to implement a robust system, large enough to handle their complex needs at a fraction of the cost of an SAP or JDEdwards solution and will continue to look for ways that they can maximize their system to help them grow.”