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➤ CASE STUDY

Stonyfield Farm *Selects* *i-Sight Case Management* Software to Improve its Handling of Customer Feedback

“The bottom line is that i-Sight has enabled our Consumer Relations group to run more efficiently, while providing valuable information to our internal groups in a timely, user friendly format.”

Customer name: Stonyfield Farms

Challenge:

- Needed an easy-to-use, flexible system for tracking and managing customer feedback
- The existing Access database was slow and difficult to use. Result: consumers and internal staff were spending too much time on the phone. Reports were difficult and time-consuming to generate.
- The existing system was not integrated with the company’s website. Information that was sent in via email had to be manually input into the database.
- Wanted a solution that would complement and support Stonyfield Farm’s mission as socially responsible, caring company

Solution:

- Selected i-Sight Case Management Software for its flexibility and fast, friendly user interface
- Customized scripting, auto-population of fields and built-in templates ensure that interactions between customers and internal staff flow naturally, with no unnecessary delays or duplication of effort.
- All information is collected in the same database, whether submitted by phone or via the company website.
- Advanced reporting tools allow managers to generate detailed reports with just a few clicks

Results:

- Consumer relations staff now handle more calls in less time
- i-Sight allows staff to address customer needs swiftly, professionally and on individual basis
- i-Sight makes it easier to detect patterns and trace the source of consumer questions and concerns
- Reports can be generated on the fly by managers without the need for advanced technical knowledge.

Stonyfield Farm, celebrating its 24th year, is the world’s leading organic yogurt manufacturer, and produces all natural and organic yogurt, smoothies, cultured soy, frozen yogurt, ice cream and milk. The company advocates that healthy food can only come from a healthy planet. It was the nation’s first dairy processor to pay farmers not to treat cows with the synthetic bovine growth hormone rBGH. Stonyfield donates 10 percent of its profits to environmental causes; was America’s first manufacturer to offset 100 percent of its CO2 emissions from its facility energy use; and recently installed the fifth largest solar array in New England to help power its production plant -- all efforts to reduce global warming.

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From its origins in the early 1980s as a project to help revitalize the struggling New England dairy industry and support family farms, Stonyfield Farm continues to maintain a close relationship with its customers. As Stonyfield Farm President and CE-Yo Gary Hirshberg explained recently in an interview with Business Week, that strong emotional connection “helps explain why we are growing at four times the category rate in some markets and three times the category rate nationally.”

Sustaining a high degree of customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth also require a dedicated, proactive approach to dealing with consumer dissatisfaction. Customers who purchase Stonyfield Farm products at their local supermarket recognize the company will listen carefully to them and respond swiftly if they bring forward a concern or a suggestion. In keeping with Stonyfield Farm’s reputation for social responsibility and commitment to “doing well by doing good,” the emphasis is building consumer trust with high-quality natural products and prompt, personalized service.

THE CHALLENGE



Until recently, Stonyfield Farm used a customized Access database to track and manage customer feedback. Each time a customer phoned the company to offer a suggestion or relay a concern, a consumer relations staff member would create a new case record in Access, enter the customer’s name and contact information, and then document the reason for his or her call.

“There were two challenges with that system,” explains Brian Olsen, Stonyfield Farm’s Manager of Consumer Relations. “First, it took a lot of time to go from one screen to the next, resulting in longer phone calls . Second, it was complicated and extremely time-consuming to extract reports from the system as well as very difficult to train the staff how to utilize the reporting function.”

He adds that while an Access-based tracking system might have sufficed when it was first put in place in mid the 1990s, “we’ve grown a lot in the past few years and the tool we were using simply wasn’t scalable.” The number of contacts Stonyfield Farm’s consumer relations department receives continues to grow each year, of which they want to respond to in a timely manner. Clearly, the time had come to replace Access with a solution better suited to the company’s needs.

In January 2005, Olsen and his colleagues embarked on a search for a new case management system that would be faster, easier to use and capable of generating detailed reports without much effort. “We demoed a number of products, but most of them were canned solutions that were not very flexible,” recalls IT Director Ed Boyle. “I would describe most of them as off-the-shelf solutions that couldn’t really be tailored to meet our needs.”

THE SOLUTION



After evaluating several competing case management products, Stonyfield Farm selected i-Sight Case Management Software from Customer Expressions, the leader in customizable, web-based solutions for managing complaints, suggestions and other examples of customer feedback.

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"The i-Sight software beat out the competition because it was the only product that really allowed us to maintain the high service quality that our customers expect," Boyle says. Not only is it fast and user-friendly, he adds, but i-Sight is also extremely adaptable. As a result, "we were able to design a solution that met our specific needs, instead of us trying to adapt our business processes to the software."

One example of that is the difference in workflow rules between the old case-tracking database and the new i-Sight solution. With the old system, a user could input the reason for the consumer's call only after he or she had entered the customer's full name and detailed contact information. "Consumers who call us typically want to talk about the issue first, and only after that do we get to the consumer's own information. So for us, the scripting of the pages was a huge consideration. With our customized i-Sight tool, everything flows naturally."

Another benefit with i-Sight is its ability to auto-populate much of the information that is required to complete a case record. When entering the details of a case, users of the old system were forced to navigate through a series of drop-down menus to select the type of product, the size, the flavor, the facility in which it was produced, and so on. Now, using the customized i-Sight database, the user merely types in the product's UPC code or date code. Based on that one piece of information, i-Sight can identify both the product and the specific production run, saving both the customer and the consumer relations specialist a lot of time and effort. "From a traceability standpoint, that's a big advantage," Boyle says. "It gives us a much more complete record, without having to ask for a lot of details from the consumer."

The net result, Olsen says, is that consumer calls can now be handled in a more professional and timely manner. "i-Sight allows us to get the information we need without taking up more of the consumer's time than is necessary. Everything is right there at our fingertips and the system is easy to use, which means our hold times are shorter resulting in excellent customer service, which is our number one priority."

In many cases, concerns require follow up with the consumer. Here, too, i-Sight helps to streamline the process. After filling in a case record, the consumer relations representative can immediately create a letter that can be easily tailored to the specific circumstance. The fact that i-Sight enables the company to respond so quickly, while at the same time treating each case on an individual basis, reinforces that Stonyfield truly cares about its consumers, he says. "We want to make sure that our consumers are satisfied before they return to the supermarket for their next purchase."

Yet another factor in i-Sight's favor, Boyle points out, is its ability to be integrated seamlessly into the Stonyfield Farm website, www.stonyfield.com. In the past, a simple "contact us" web form allowed consumers to email their concerns or suggestions to Olsen's department. But because the form was not integrated with Access, staff members would have to read each email and then manually input the information into the database. "On a typical Monday, it would often take us half a day just to go through the emails and download them into the old system," Olsen recalls. To further complicate matters, the emails were often missing important details, such as the product size or production date. As a result, a staff member would have to send an email back to the consumer to request the necessary information.

The new system eliminates that duplication of effort by ensuring that everyone – internal staff as well as consumers who visit the company's website – uses the same software and sees exactly the same prompts. "Most of the products we evaluated weren't capable of being used both in a customer-facing role as well as internally for our own consumer relations staff, but i-Sight really met our needs," Boyle says.

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Best of all, the entire i-Sight system functions in real-time, which means that company managers can generate up-to-the-minute reports with only a few keystrokes. With the old system, Olsen and his colleagues were incapable of generating reports until the end of the reporting period – which often meant the end of the month. The i-Sight solution, he says, “allows us to view the contacts as we receive them , which is an important benefit for our product mangers and the quality control group.”

Adds Boyle: “The bottom line is that i-Sight has enabled our Consumer Relations group to run more efficiently, while providing valuable information to our internal groups in a timely, user friendly format.”