



CUSTOMER[®] expressions

PROCESS DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

➔ CASE STUDY

U.S. Can Corporation

"The team at Customer Expressions has been great. They've helped us respond not just to quality issues but also customer service issues, and to do it faster and better."

"A number of our customers like the i-Sight solution so much that they are thinking of adopting the same system"

QUICK FACTS

Customer name: U.S. Can Corporation

Company profile: No. 1 in aerosol container sales in the United States and No. 2 in Europe. U.S. Can also produces nearly half of the one-gallon paint cans sold in the United States and is a leading supplier of plastic pails, drums and specialty packaging.

Location: Headquarters in Lombard, IL. Ten plants in the United States and four in Europe.

Business need: Case management system to track and respond to customer feedback and complaints

Results:

- > 400% ROI due to reduced shipments of non-conforming product
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Lower labor costs
- Reduced manufacturing plant downtime

THE CHALLENGE



At U.S. Can Corporation, continuous improvement is more than a slogan. The company's laser-like focus on quality and fixing small problems before they get big has helped make it one of the world's largest manufacturers of aerosol cans, paint cans and other metal containers – with 14 manufacturing plants and sales of \$772 million in 2005.

But it's not only the quality of its metal containers that concerns U.S. Can. Two years ago, the Lombard, IL-based multinational set out to improve the quality of its customer service by finding a better way to track and respond to feedback and complaints. "With our old system, we relied on a mix of faxes, phone calls and e-mail," recalls Doug McFadden, Director of Quality Assurance. "Our effectiveness in responding to complaints was 25 per cent – meaning that a quarter of the time we eventually got back to the customer with an answer. The rest of the time, the complaint got lost somewhere in our system."

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THE CHALLENGE



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To make matters worse, the company didn't have an efficient means of tracking defects. Each plant's Quality Assurance manager was responsible for keeping his or her own logs in an Excel spreadsheet. "All of that information would come to me and then I'd have to clean it up and enter it in our corporate database," McFadden says. "The input time was cumbersome and there was a lot of duplication of effort."

THE SOLUTION



McFadden knew there had to be a better way. After researching several alternatives, he chose i-Sight from Customer Expressions – a web-based solution that makes it easy to capture, manage and learn from customer feedback. Within a month, the solution was up and running, customized to U.S. Can's needs. "Implementation was fast and training wasn't difficult," McFadden says. "It's definitely user-friendly. In fact, when we need to train a new employee we generally we do it in a phone call – it's that easy."

Now, when customers wish to report a problem, they can do it themselves by visiting U.S. Can's website and filling out a customized form. (Smaller customers typically submit issues to an account representative, who uses the same capture form to log the request.) The customer is automatically sent an email acknowledgement providing a case number, a contact name and a message explaining that a representative will contact them within one business day. An e-mail notification is also sent to the QA manager at the plant where the defect originated. Using the same system, the QA manager can track interactions with the customer, record the root cause of the complaint, potential corrective actions and the resolution. He can also tag a case for follow-up and assign it to the appropriate sales representative, who will be notified by e-mail two days before the follow-up is required.

The i-Sight solution also offers a rich array of reporting capabilities. For example, the CEO is automatically notified when an issue is submitted from any of the company's top 10 revenue-generating customers. A President's Report shows high-level information to keep managers on top of resolution performance and alert them to any new trends or spikes in volume. Managers can access both aggregate and plant-specific information in real-time regarding volumes, issues, processes, product lines and more. And ad-hoc trend reports give managers the ability to generate reports based on any parameter (issue, customer, etc.) for any time period (weekly, quarterly, annual, etc.).

THE RESULTS



According to McFadden, customers like the i-Sight solution "because they can see that we have a system and they know they're going to get results." Previously, only 25 per cent of customers who submitted complaints received a response; on average that response took 28 days. Now every complaint is investigated and addressed, typically within six or seven days. "We're reduced our response time by 75 per cent," says McFadden. "Our customers really appreciate that."

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THE RESULTS



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i-Sight has also proven to be a valuable tool for continuous improvement. Each time a QA Manager receives a case file, he or she assigns it a severity number from 1 to 10 – the higher the number, the more serious the problem. When the system was introduced two years ago, the average severity rating was 5.5. It has since dropped to 4.2. “i-Sight is helping us drive down that number by improving our ability to establish root cause and corrective action. It allows us to look at the business as a whole and at an individual plant level and see what our real issues are.” Examining trend reports recently, McFadden noticed a number of complaints involving rusty cans. i-Sight quickly helped him isolate the source of the problem: a new warehousing contractor whose staff had not been trained in the proper storage of U.S. Can’s products. “That’s something we wouldn’t have found out so quickly if it hadn’t been for i-Sight,” McFadden says.

One way to measure the impact of i-Sight is to look at how U.S. Can has managed to reduce its shipments of non-conforming product – cans and other containers that fail to meet customer expectations. By that yardstick, i-Sight has delivered a return of investment (ROI) of at least 400 per cent. But that doesn’t include all of the indirect benefits. According to McFadden, they include lower labor costs, higher customer satisfaction and reduced manufacturing plant downtime. “The team at Customer Expressions has been great,” he says. “They’ve helped us respond not just to quality issues but also customer service issues, and to do it faster and better. I can’t say enough good things about them.”