



PROCESS DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

CASE STUDY

Hubbell Canada's Customer Feedback System Measures Up to High ISO Standards

"Our ISO auditor was impressed when I sat down and gave him a test drive of our i-Sight system during an interim audit. In our most recent audit, he commented that, in the past three to four years, he's seen us move from a distributed, disorganized feedback method to a centralized system that lets us analyze trends, close feedback loops and set expectations with customers."

— Jason Bedford, Manager, Service Excellence

Customer name: Hubbell Canada LP

Challenge:

- The Service Excellence department found its progress limited by manual, cumbersome tracking in Excel spreadsheets.
- Customer issues were distributed across multiple departments, preventing a big-picture view and trend reporting.
- The department manager spent days preparing for ISO audits and hours on a month-end report.

Solution:

- i-Sight is a case-based management system that allows action items to be assigned, and automatically sends reminders, alarms and escalations to keep all case managers on schedule.
- The software automatically emails customers as soon as issues are submitted to confirm receipt, again when the case has been assigned, and when the issue is resolved.
- Hubbell Canada has factual data at its fingertips with which to identify root causes and take corrective action.

Results:

- i-Sight reduces month-end reporting time dramatically, from hours to minutes.
- The company's annual ISO audits are simpler now, reducing audit preparation time by several days.
- The company takes corrective action to reduce the costs associated with warranty claims and product issues.
- Real-time problem analysis and appropriate escalations ensure customers' issues are addressed with urgency.
- Hubbell is completing longer-term trend analysis highlighting customer-focused opportunities to be reviewed by department managers and prioritized for its Kaizen business improvement process.

From Harvey Hubbell's invention of the electrical power plug to modern fiber-optics, Hubbell Incorporated has become one of the world's most trusted names in electrical and lighting products. Today, the company makes tens of thousands of products for connecting and utilizing electrical, telecommunication and lighting needs.

Hubbell Canada, based in Pickering, Ontario, specializes in a broad range of wiring and lighting products for commercial, industrial and residential environments. As with all Hubbell divisions, ISO-certified Hubbell Canada is committed to quality products and operations.

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PROCESS DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

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THE CHALLENGE

Hubbell Canada continuously works toward higher standards for managing customer feedback. To that end, the division formed the Service Excellence department in 2005. However, Jason Bedford, manager of the department, found that his team could only go so far by tracking customer issues manually in Excel spreadsheets. Moreover, Marketing, Sales and Customer Service each had their own methods of logging customer issues, preventing a centralized, unified approach or aggregate trending and reporting.

"We're very proactive and preventive, and have corrective action processes in place. We're using the Kaizen process for streamlining our business," Bedford said. "But different business managers had their own method of filing customer issues, so we couldn't process or report on them centrally. Without a big-picture view, it was hard to know whether we were directing money to the right things to get the best return on our investment and ultimately contributing to higher customer satisfaction."

About that time, the company's ISO auditor encouraged the team to centralize customer feedback so that the company could better identify recurring issues and begin taking corrective action measures. With the newly formed Service Excellence department to take in all customer issues, Hubbell Canada had the right organizational structure in place, and now needed a centralized customer feedback system to centralize this data and to automate the workflow.

THE SOLUTION

The company evaluated a number of issue-tracking applications before selecting i-Sight Service and Complaints from Customer Expressions. A customizable, web-based solution, i-Sight centralizes all customer issues, allowing teams to collaborate, improve response times, ensure issues are resolved, and identify root causes. The software's customizability meant that the company could tailor it with "Hubbell terminology," rather than generic software terms. Plus, the software provided a high level of functionality combined with affordability.

A Customer Expressions consultant assisted with the initial setup to ensure workflows and terminology match Hubbell Canada's specific environment. Today, about 90 employees access the system across Service Excellence, Operations, Distribution, Planning, Sales and Marketing teams. About 30 of those users serve as case managers, ensuring that all customer issues are addressed appropriately and in a timely fashion.

Hubbell Canada tracks three main types of customer input: general customer feedback; product notifications related to quality issues and replacement products; and warranty claims. Customer issues come in either by phone, e-mail or through an online form on the home page of the company's Web site that is tied to i-Sight. i-Sight workflow capabilities ensure that issues follow a consistent process all the way through to resolution. It assigns action items for relevant divisions, and automatically sends reminders and alarms to keep all case managers on schedule to resolve issues in set timeframes.

"Issues receive a higher level of attention than if they came in through email," Bedford said. "I get about 250 emails a day, so centralizing customer issues in i-Sight ensures that they are assigned, action items are issued and a timeframe is established to respond in."

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PROCESS DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

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i-Sight also automatically sends notifications to customers. The software emails customers as soon as issues are submitted, again when they have been assigned—along with the case manager’s contact information—and when the issue is resolved. Automating that complete process ensures continuous communication with customers. “i-Sight gives us that complete closed-loop feedback process so we can say, ‘Here’s what we’ve done to resolve your issue,’” Bedford said.

With customized drop-down boxes, Service Excellence has the fields it needs to query on certain issues. For example, Bedford can drill down to understand the exact labor and materials costs involved in specific issues, such as warranty claims for certain products or specific brands.

Service Excellence sends monthly reports to Sales, Marketing and Operations to show trends in those areas. Instead of guessing about the biggest issues or focusing on the squeakiest wheels, the company now knows specifically which issues occur most often.

“Before, we addressed issues more based on passion and emotion rather than on fact,” Bedford said. “In the last 18 months, we now know a problem has occurred X times and here’s what we did to resolve it. Now it’s about identifying the root cause and working toward a resolution.”

According to Bedford, i-Sight not only helps Hubbell Canada manage product issues, but all customer feedback. “Anything that customers are telling us, let’s capture it,” Bedford said. When customers had specific input about the company’s Web site, Service Excellence took that in and put it through the same processes as all other issues. We even capture positive feedback about our employees, and use this in our performance appraisal process.

i-Sight also delivers on the company’s expectations for ease of use and flexibility. Service Excellence expanded use of the software without the need to bring in a programmer. Moreover, Customer Expressions has proved to be a partner more than a vendor.

“The consistency and uptime of i-Sight has been outstanding,” he said. “The relationship has continued to be there as well. They respond very quickly. It’s nice to know we’re not a number, or that they sold us and we never hear from them again.”

THE RESULTS

With a centralized issue-tracking system, Service Excellence has a process in place to ensure it captures, prioritizes and takes action on all customer feedback. Ultimately, the company expects that to help reduce the costs associated with process breakdowns, warranty claims and product issues in the future.

At the same time, the system reduces the amount of time that Service Excellence spends on activities like month-end reporting. They can use the built-in i-Sight reports or easily run custom reports. Previously, it may have taken days to collect all the relevant data from various departments and then manually create reports.

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The logo for i-Sight, featuring a stylized blue 'i' with a white dot and a blue swoosh, followed by the word 'Sight' in a blue serif font with a registered trademark symbol.

PROCESS DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

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"I can generate what someone wants, how they want it. I can say, 'Go grab some coffee and I'll have it for you in 15 minutes,'" Bedford said.

The company's annual ISO audits are likewise simpler now, also reducing audit preparation time by several days. All the information is right there at the click of a few buttons.

"Our ISO auditor was impressed when I sat down and gave him a test drive of our i-Sight system," Bedford said. "In our most recent audit, he commented that, in the past three to four years, he's seen us move from a distributed, disorganized feedback method to a centralized system that lets us analyze trends, close feedback loops and set expectations with customers."

All that contributes to higher service levels at Hubbell. "Our mandate is to offer exceptional customer service, quick response, and give customers the answers they need," Bedford said. "With i-Sight, we can see trends and look at what we can do as a business to change them, and then go back to the customer and let them know they helped shape our business in a positive way. i-Sight reassures the customers that there is a higher level of accountability, and that if they speak out, their problems are going to quickly get resolved."

"i-Sight has allowed us to develop a tool that takes customers feedback, and to develop longer-term action plans to reduce them from happening again in the future," he added. "We see this as a service differentiator within our industry, which allows us to add value to the process, in turn making it easier for our customers to do business with us."