

**Contact Centers  
In A Multi-Product  
Financial Services  
Company**



## Contact Centers in a Multi-Product Financial Services Company

A diversified Fortune 500 financial services and insurance provider, with customers in the US and abroad, acquired numerous contact centers through mergers and acquisitions over several years. These contact



centers were organized by specialty, geography, type of customer relationship, and product offerings. Many different groups of front-line service providers used dozens of information and transaction processing applications to carry out a wide range of business processes.

During the time these contact centers were being acquired, the Company's principal approach to reducing the number of call transfers and customer complaints was to train specific Customer Service Agents (CSAs) to be conversant with a wide range of complex business applications and processes. Training, by itself, turned out to be a very expensive

and not very successful approach to providing the high quality of customer service desired by the Company's leadership and required by the Company's complex and highly competitive marketplace.

## Business Problems and Challenges

The Company's IT organization was faced with a daunting challenge to rationalize the enterprise computing environment and provide a broad range of cost, complexity, and risk reductions. Planners could foresee years of platform upgrades, application integration and migration, data base reorganization, and nearly continuous user disruption and retraining. The necessary IT architecture overhaul appeared to be a high risk activity for both IT and the business units.

## The Company Chose to deploy Cicero Technology

Cicero offered a way forward for both business and IT that embodied considerably less risk and offered the promise of immediate major benefits. After a careful review and evaluation process, Company IT and Business Unit executives agreed to deploy Cicero technology broadly across the various contact centers. Each business would use Cicero to solve its unique cross-platform and cross-application integration problems.

Preliminary analysis suggested that Cicero technology in all the major business unit call

centers would yield more than 10% productivity improvement overall. More important, management saw the opportunity for significantly improved customer service.

Cicero professionals combined their efforts with IT and business unit specialists and very rapidly used Cicero technology to implement integrated desktop workstations for each of the businesses. Cicero technology was the same in each application, varying only in the details of which applications were integrated across which platforms. The following sections briefly describe the major variations.

## Producer Group Background

This group provides frontline call support for the Company's producers, both internal employees and independent agents. Customer Service Agents (CSA) in this group are not required to have a Series 6 certification. Callers whose needs cannot be met by the Producer Group are routed to the Issues Resolution Group for high level support or to a Brokerage Group to place asset trades.

This group's key functions are to provide information to callers (primarily brokers and insurance sales agents) and to perform basic

administrative tasks -- name and address changes, duplicate statements, etc.

Siebel CRM is used to control the agent's phone by scheduling agent availability through a Genesis telephony system. Several 3270 applications used extensively including check management and issuance systems and document management. MS Internet Explorer is used extensively to access the Company's branded website.

## Cicero Producer Group Solution

Cicero was deployed on the Producer agent workstations resulting in substantial productivity improvements and cost reductions.

Cicero has also helped increase ROI for the large CRM investment by greatly reducing the business process integration cost and complexity and facilitating cross-group service. The Siebel CRM application was integrated with other applications so that it can now be used for more than just agent availability. Now when calls are routed to other contact center groups, customer and account information is automatically passed through to the appropriate agent's Cicero workspace and applications are updated as required by the customer's needs. Training and turnover costs have been cut by more than 50%.

Siebel CRM use is now growing within the organization fueled in part by Cicero-generated automated data input from calls and agent workflows. Additionally, Siebel is used to record 'reason-for-call' data. Before Cicero, each agent was expected to record that information in the Siebel application. Compliance was less than 10%. With Cicero, this data is now automatically extracted through the agent's work processes and entered into Siebel.



## Issues Resolution Group (IRG) Background

The IRG is the Company's second-tier research team responsible for any incoming issues that cannot be quickly handled by frontline agents. Outstanding issues had to be resolved within 24 hours.

Though this group experienced lower turnover rates than most others, it had one of the highest training costs because of task complexities and the frequent need for application and business process changes. Team members were available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday and 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Saturday and Sunday. All team members were required to be Series 6 certified.

IRG agents receive calls either directly via a toll free number or calls which were forwarded by a Producer CSA. If a call comes in via a toll free number, the IVR system collects selected information about the caller, such as the SSN or caller ID, causing a Siebel screen pop with the broker and client's contact information. If the call is transferred, the caller must repeat this gathered information to the IRG agent.

Most of the agents were writing down the collected information (name of caller, the person of who transferred it, contract number, etc.) and then referring to their notes and re-keying that data throughout the call.

At a minimum, an experienced agent used 12 keystrokes (3270 screen name and contract number or SSN) for each call. Most calls involved significantly more data entry since at least four different applications (3270, Siebel CRM, document management, and check processing and tracking) are routinely used to resolve even the simplest customer issue.

## Cicero IRG Solution

Cicero was deployed on the IRG agent workstations, resulting in almost immediate productivity improvements and cost reductions. Siebel CRM, 3270, client server, Jacada (AD) and other applications were seamlessly integrated within the Cicero desktop.

Brokerage calls are now handled with the professional care, accuracy, and attention to detail expected of the best financial services firms. When calls are routed from other groups, customer and account information is automatically passed through to the appropriate applications as required by the customer's needs. Training costs for task changes, new applications or modified business processes were cut by more than 60%.

## Brokerage Group Background

The highly skilled Brokerage group is made up of more than a dozen agents working from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm week days. The evening and weekend teams handle off-hour calls.

Agents primarily handle calls transferred from producers (brokers-dealers) and insurance and annuity contract owners, who typically call via the toll free number. Since this area is just one place where a trade can be requested by a contract owner, the agent must reference other applications to be assured that duplicate orders are not entered. Depending on how and when the trade is placed, the information may not be up-to-date in the other systems.

The primary applications for this group are 3270 based as well as the Company's intranet website.

Approximately 50% of the users in this group also use a client application that provides a front-end to the 3270 host system. This application has several pop-up windows that were always centered on the screen. This pop-up application was in the process of being replaced by an Agent Desktop (AD) application by Jacada, AD is a Java application that is a front end to the 3270 application. The AD application was desired because there are several 3270 screens used in the Brokerage group that show the allocation of securities within a 401k plan. It is necessary to break down information on the origin of the money (i.e.: employer or employee), but though this information is segmented automatically in the client-server systems it is not integrated with other applications that may need the data. The pop-up application is also used for client interaction tracking done via a Notebook function, which allows work to be queued and rescheduled until complete.



## Cicero Brokerage Group Solution

Cicero was deployed on the Brokerage agent workstations, resulting in substantial productivity improvements and cost reductions. The Siebel CRM, 3270, client server, Jacada (AD) and other desktop applications have been integrated in the Cicero workspace.

Cicero was implemented in this demanding environment because it significantly enhances and extends the Jacada (AD) solution by leaving all of the business logic on the mission critical 3270 system so there is only one place to make modifications. The existing client server application is used because of its screen formatting and ability to provide composite detailing on a single screen. Cicero integrates and seamlessly shares information among these disparate applications, creating an efficient 'composite' workspace.

Brokerage calls are now handled with the seamless professional care, accuracy and attention to detail found in the largest Wall Street firms. When calls are routed from other groups, customer and account information is automatically passed through to the appropriate agent workspace and applications as required by the customer's needs. Training and turnover costs have been cut by more than 40%.

## Variable Life Group Background

Account relationships are critical to this group; therefore agents must be accurate and fast. They handle calls forwarded from clients and

producers that are specific to variable life insurance, with the majority of callers requesting information about a customer policy. Initial information was verified or viewed in the 3270-based COBOL system and then cross-referenced in other applications.

Agents used a suite of legacy COBOL applications, FileNet, Internet Explorer or Netscape browsers to access corporate intranets, fax, and call tracking systems. A number of Microsoft Excel and Word templates also resided on the agent desktop.

## Cicero Variable Life Group Solution

Cicero was deployed on the Variable Life agent workstations resulting in significant productivity improvements and cost reductions. The legacy COBOL applications, FileNet, corporate intranet information, fax, and call tracking systems were integrated with Oracle Forms, Microsoft Office, Lotus Notes and other applications, including Siebel CRM, 3270, client-server and other desktop applications within a matter of weeks.



Since Variable Life calls are now handled faster, more accurately and at substantially lower cost than before, customer satisfaction has improved substantially.

## Fixed Life Group Background

In this group, training costs and turnover were higher than other groups as it typically required at least three months for an agent to become proficient at handling calls without coaching. This group's information was provided through two applications: a very old legacy IBM System

360 emulation application and a third party customized application used to look up information by policy or agent number.

Both applications share common backend data services but the third party system provides a much greater amount of data per screen. Call center agents also use this information in other applications such as Beneficiary and Underwriting. This group also uses other applications including FileNet, a call tracking applet, check tracking, and fax.

## Cicero Fixed Life Group Solution

Cicero was deployed on the Fixed Life agent workstations. Oracle Forms, MS Office, Lotus Notes and other applications were integrated with Siebel CRM, 3270, client-server and desktop applications within a matter of weeks. Calls are now handled faster, more accurately and at substantially lower cost than before.

## Broad Operational Impact

No doubt the introduction of integrated workstations based on Cicero technology resulted in enterprise benefits to the IT organization and the Company as a whole. The biggest impacts, however, were felt immediately by the front-line service providers at the working levels. CSAs in the various business units experienced positive changes in their work. The jobs became:

- **Easier.** Each CSA experienced substantially improved application ease-of-use as the Cicero solution was phased in. Agent benefits included: reduced initial sign-on times; automatic restarts for timed-out legacy applications; reduced point-and-click navigation time to move between applications; reduced data entry time and data entry errors by data sharing between applications.
- **Better.** The generally improved work environment for agents and their higher staff productivity, improved morale and job satisfaction and led to reduced turnover
- **More interesting.** Cicero integrated desktops enabled agents to handle many different types of calls, thereby reducing the number of costly call transfers and

increasing customer satisfaction - while greatly simplifying staff scheduling

- **Easier to learn.** Cicero's task-oriented, intuitive desktop with point-and-click navigation reduced training requirements and simplified use – new agents can be trained in Cicero desktop use in just one day
- **Easier to understand.** Cicero's role-oriented user interface capability minimized business application training and the automation of many business specific tasks removed the requirement that agents learn the interior complexities of each application

The Cicero solution enables higher morale, reduced turnover, and less job-related stress. These improvements in the CSA job were the foundation for the enterprise benefits of lower cost, better customer service, and lower operational risk

## Key Results

- **Productivity.** This modest investment in the Company's call centers provided a 10%+ increase in productivity within the first 6 months, allowing agents to handle

substantial customer growth with no increase in headcount.

- **Savings.** The solution produced annual savings well above the Company's 10%+ target. The cumulative effects of reduced talk time and lower wait times have had a net positive impact on the Company's customers, employees and external producers. This has led to a net savings nearing \$1.2 million annually.
- **Highly leveraged solution.** The enterprise IT organization solved a broad range of front-line operational problems with the deployment of Cicero integrated desktops.
- **Extraordinarily fast results.** The customer satisfaction metrics improved substantially and target ROI measures were reached within the first 6 months.
- **Safe changes.** Modest training requirements and extreme ease-of-use design made it possible to introduce change in nearly all parts of the Company with minimum risk and disruption.
- **Outstanding success.** The solution provided credibility for the enterprise IT organization so that they could pursue their longer-range architectural overhaul with the full confidence of the business unit managers and senior executives.