



# Virgin Mobile USA Achieves Real-Time Customer Service with Siebel Communications

In June 2002, Virgin Mobile USA introduced a new type of wireless service to the United States, focused on the rapidly growing youth market. Rather than building its own network backbone, Virgin Mobile is using Sprint PCS' telecommunications capacity, and rather than offering complicated plans with yearly contracts, it is offering a simple, pay-as-you-go pricing plan with no long-term obligations. Recognizing that providing superior customer service is a critical success factor in the wireless marketplace, Virgin Mobile selected Siebel Communications as a critical part of its IT infrastructure. Scalable and reliable, Siebel Communications ensures that customers can "top-up" their accounts instantaneously any time of day, through any channel, and continue to receive uninterrupted wireless service. With the Siebel implementation, Virgin Mobile's Central Intelligence call center is approaching world-class standards in customer service.

After a highly successful launch in the UK, Virgin Mobile entered the U.S. market in June 2002. A joint venture between Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group and Sprint, which operates the largest all-digital, all-PCS nationwide wireless network, Virgin Mobile is the first mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) in the United States—and the nation's first wireless service to solely target the youth market. Instead of undertaking the expense of building its own cellular network infrastructure, Virgin Mobile utilizes Sprint's wireless network to deliver service to its customers, while retaining all responsibility for customer service and subscriber maintenance.

Virgin Mobile offers a simple pay-as-you-go pricing plan with no contracts to sign and no fine print. The pricing is simple—just 25 cents per minute for the first ten minutes of each day, and then 10 cents for every minute thereafter. This includes the cost of

voicemail service, caller ID, call waiting, long distance, surcharges, and taxes. All Virgin Mobile phones come equipped with a unique suite of content called VirginXtras, completely tailored to customers' interests and lifestyles. VirginXtras include features like Rescue Ring (which lets users preset their phone to get out of a sticky situation), Hit List (which lets users listen to and vote on brand new music), games, and more. Through Virgin Mobile's strategic agreement with MTV networks, VirginXtras also include exclusive content from MTV and VH1 and additional content from Nickelodeon.

## The Customer Service Imperative

Virgin Mobile USA realized early on that providing the best customer service in the industry would be vital to its success. "We are fundamentally different from any other operator in North America," says Mike Parks, CIO, Virgin Mobile USA. "Although

## SOLUTION OVERVIEW

### Virgin Mobile USA

Pay-as-you-go wireless service provider targeting the youth market

### Industry

Communications

### Geographies

United States

### Business Challenges

- Provide seamless customer service across multiple channels
- Automate account activation and account management processes
- Maximize productivity of call center personnel

### Solution

Deployed Siebel Communications to more than 600 users within six months

### Benefits

- Customer service levels approaching world-class
- Full automation of account activation and account management processes
- Improved call center productivity

### Solution Components

Siebel Communications

Hardware: Compaq

Database: Oracle

Back Office: BEA transaction hub connects to inventory, billing, and provisioning systems

### Siebel Alliance Partner

Patni Computer Systems, Inc.

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—Mike Parks,  
CIO,  
Virgin Mobile USA

we are running on top of the Sprint network, our customers have a uniquely Virgin Mobile experience. Everything that happens—in terms of customers’ interactions with our user interface, Web site, and customer care environment—is supported by systems that Virgin Mobile integrated, built, or customized. Another differentiator is that, because we are pay-as-you-go, we need to deliver in real time. If a customer’s balance goes to zero, they want to put additional money into their account and make another call instantaneously—they don’t want to wait 24 hours. If they order a ring tone, they want to place the order and have it filled immediately. It’s critical that we be able to deliver an offering now.”

#### **Needed: Real-Time Offerings for Outstanding Service**

Virgin Mobile’s vision required applications that could support the delivery of a real-time experience at any time of day, across multiple channels. “It’s easier to establish IT systems for a postpaid cellular service provider, since they just run the billing system a month after the calls have been made to determine what the customer owes,” explains Parks. “For a prepaid provider, everything happens immediately, resulting in a tremendous systems challenge. You need systems that can seamlessly integrate with other systems. You need to be able to instantly share data across channels and complete transactions in real time. You must have real-time failover, so customers are not inconvenienced if a system goes down. This requires scale, reliability, and quality, and meeting that challenge gives you a lot of power, because it allows you to provide outstanding service to your customers.”

To meet the challenge, Virgin Mobile knew it needed a customer relationship

management (CRM) solution that would support easy self-service over the Web and allow customers to speak with knowledgeable, friendly customer service representatives who could resolve their inquiries in a single call. “We wanted to give the agents the ability to have control of the call—not just to provide information—and to resolve problems and to capitalize on selling opportunities,” says Parks.

#### **A Comprehensive and Reliable Solution**

To fulfill this vision, Virgin Mobile implemented Siebel Communications, a suite of Siebel business applications tailored to the needs of telecommunications companies. “Siebel Communications was the most comprehensive and reliable solution that we evaluated,” says Parks. “I had experience with Siebel business applications in a prior company, and we were very comfortable with the quality of Siebel Systems’ support infrastructure, as well as with the responsiveness of the local account team and Siebel’s telecommunications product group.”

Working with Patni Computer Systems, Inc., a Siebel Alliance Partner, Virgin Mobile completed its implementation of Siebel Communications in less than six months and with a very aggressive budget. Using BEA as its transactions hub, Virgin Mobile seamlessly integrated the Siebel solution with a range of other third-party systems to form the foundation of its IT infrastructure. Parks continues, “During the project I was confident of the Siebel product and the company, and Patni provided an experienced senior team to implement the Siebel applications.”

#### **Using Siebel Workflow to Deliver “Now” Service**

Since Virgin Mobile offers pay-as-you-go service, it is critical that customers can

quickly and easily “top-up” their accounts. Virgin Mobile offers customers two options for automatic top-up: One is based on day of the month, and the other is triggered when a low balance threshold is reached. When an automatic top-up trigger is activated, Siebel Workflow sends the transaction out through BEA, charges the customer’s credit card, updates the balance information, and sends a text message confirming top-up to the customer’s cell phone. “All four core systems can execute a customer’s request in seconds,” says Parks, “so there is virtually no latency between request and execution.”

If the customer makes a request through the Central Intelligence call center, Siebel Workflow is again critical to rapid, easy execution. “Almost any issue can get resolved in a single call,” says Samvit Raina, Vice President, CRM Practice, Patni Computer Systems, Inc. “If a customer requests an activation, for example, the Central Intelligence representative captures the customer’s profile information and then completes a simple activation process to send the transaction information to BEA. Next, BEA provisions the account in the billing system, and the Sprint wireless provisioning system returns to Siebel with information that the account has been activated. Siebel then initiates a cascade of activities to set up a new customer, including sending a welcome message, adding starting airtime to the account, and establishing warranty dates and asset records. It’s a fairly complex process that is fully managed by Siebel Workflow.”

Virgin Mobile’s vision of seamless, multichannel service, facilitated by a completely automated system, is quickly becoming a reality. In January 2003, 87 percent of all Virgin Mobile top-ups were

completed by self-service. In that same month, 50 percent of customers activated their phones via the Virgin Mobile Web site.

#### **Empowering the Call Center**

While Siebel Workflow supports the real-time aspect of Virgin Mobile’s service, Siebel Communications’ ease of use is also improving productivity in the Central Intelligence call center. “In focus groups with both novice and expert customer service representatives, the feedback has been very positive,” says Raina. “A number of these agents have been in environments where they have had to page through multiple screens to get what they need to serve a customer. With Siebel, all of the functionality is available to them on the screen, and handling specific customer situations is managed through screen pops. As a result, we can handle the vast majority of inquiries with no transfers.”

#### **Customer Service Levels above Industry Average**

The customer service focus at Virgin Mobile has resulted in real, measurable results. “From the onset, we contracted a third party to provide customer service monitoring. We’ve experienced very high service levels, scoring higher than industry averages by 10 to 15 points,” says Parks. “In fact, we’re already approaching world-class service levels. From day one, we’ve had a real focus on providing a very positive experience to our customers, whether they’re dealing with automated voice response or a live agent.”

#### **Using Siebel for Proactive Customer Management**

Virgin Mobile’s IT team performs incremental monthly upgrades on the system, allowing the company to enrich its product mix by offering youth market-oriented services such as a range of content from MTV Networks, including news, video

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Vice President,  
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Computer Systems, Inc.,  
systems integrator on  
the project

#### **Customer’s Implementation Advice**

- Use an experienced, business-focused systems integrator
- Use vertical applications for maximum value
- Leverage out-of-the-box functionality

voting, and audio postcards. And now that Virgin Mobile has an established user base, the company is actively using Siebel Communications for customer life cycle management. "We're now becoming much more aggressive in keeping track of our customer portfolio and how customers use the product, what they like, and what they don't like," says Parks. "We're looking at ways to use Siebel to help us better understand our customers' behaviors and preferences and to start crafting offers that could expand their relationship with Virgin Mobile. That's the next level of sophistication."



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