

Schenker's New Portal Advances Customer Service

Verastream Host Integrator is key to the solution



Schenker AB, a leading provider of integrated logistics services, had a serious customer service problem. A lack of front- to back-end systems integration resulted in long caller wait times, a lost-call rate of 20 percent, and high employee turnover. To reverse these trends, Schenker built an online portal that integrated seven different legacy applications. They used Attachmate® Verastream® software to make the integration possible.

The company, a Swedish subsidiary of 130-year-old German-based Schenker AG, supports the global exchange of goods via land, air, and sea, including all related logistics services. It employs 4,000 people, 300 of them at company headquarters in Gothenburg, and has 42,000 contract customers. Domestic shipments account for roughly 90 percent of the 18 million shipments handled annually.

Dissatisfied Customers, Stressed-Out Employees

The transport spectrum covers reservation, storage, delivery, and receipt events. To ensure a smooth process, Schenker employs about 300 people in 28 customer service units across the country. They are tasked with supporting both domestic and cross-border transport, as well as storage.

Each week the customer service group handles some 25,000 calls. Sixty-five percent of the calls are related to transport reservations. The rest typically center around pricing, delivery times, or invoicing. One of the most frequently asked questions is, "When will my shipment arrive?"

Before the new portal solution, even the simplest question could take an average of 2.5 minutes to answer. Contact center agents often had to retrieve 30 discrete pieces of information—including contact, price, and invoice data—from applications on multiple systems. Sometimes, when accessing one system, agents would be timed-out of another, forcing them to log on and start over again.

The longer customers had to wait, first for the phone to be answered and then for contact center agents to collect the requested information, the more frustrated they got. And there were those who refused to wait at all. Schenker calculated that 20 percent of incoming callers hung up before they spoke to anybody.

The volume of calls, combined with criticism from angry customers, created stressful working conditions. According to one contact center agent, "We got lots of practice discussing the weather and making small talk to keep customers occupied." Consequently, retaining employees became a challenge.

QUICK VIEW

Problem

Excessive caller wait times, lost calls, and employee turnover—all due to a lack of systems integration.

Solution

Used Verastream to connect OS/390 applications to a new web portal.

Results

- Boosted employee productivity.
- Reduced training time and costs.
- Increased revenue by decreasing lost calls.

Building a Portal to Information

"The business goal was to regain both customer and employee satisfaction by cutting contact center agent response time," said Ulf Pettersson, IT project manager at Schenker. "The technology goal was to replace our obsolete system without jeopardizing mission-critical information."

To that end, Schenker IT first considered investing in a CRM system. After some research, however, this idea was dropped in favor of a more economical portal solution. Pettersson and his team constructed the portal and named it Shipment Information OnLine. Through the portal, users would be able to access seven applications on disparate systems, including IBM Series i (AS/400), IBM Mainframe (S/390), and UNIX systems.

Now Pettersson's team just needed a way to integrate the seven underlying legacy applications with the new portal.

Completing the Solution

The ideal integration tool would be flexible enough to accommodate Schenker's many homegrown systems. Kjell Jennstig, a Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Group consultant working on the project, recommended that Pettersson evaluate Attachmate Verastream.

Attachmate Verastream Host Integrator encapsulates mainframe data and logic via the screen interface, exposing business processes as web services, XML, Java, and .NET. components. The Verastream-generated services can be mixed, matched, and reused to build composite applications with a new look

and feel. Whether your environment is IBM Series z (S/390), IBM Series i (AS/400), UNIX, HP OpenVMS, or HP e3000, Verastream delivers rapid results because you can use existing development skills, familiar IT tools, and proven mainframe investments. No changes to valuable mainframe-application code or associated business processes are required.

Jennstig had used Verastream before with positive results. "I was able to work with the product after just a few hours," he said. "It's stable and well-designed. And the support I got from Attachmate's European organization was a tremendous asset to me during implementation."

Early Results

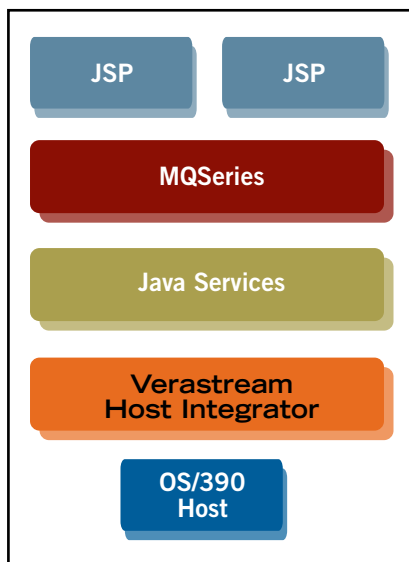
Tested in the fall, Verastream was in full production by spring. Within a few months, the new system had already boosted contact center agent productivity.

Now when customers ask about arrival times, contact center agents can answer promptly. They no longer need to log on to each system individually. Instead, they simply enter the waybill number (the key external identifier for shipments) and wait for the portal to query the underlying back-office applications on the status of each event in the transport process. The relevant loading, unloading, delivery, or storage information is sent to agents almost instantly.

"The new portal system lets me view all important transport documents immediately," said Kristina Eriksson, a Stockholm-based contact center agent. "It even includes the functions for looking up both export and import deliveries. I can work so much faster than I could before."

The faster response times are responsible for reducing the number of unanswered calls and increasing the number of transport reservations processed. What's more, training time and costs are down—which means Schenker's bottom line is up.

"Verastream is especially suited for organizations whose legacy mainframe systems provide mission-critical functions for their business processes," said Jennstig. "At Schenker, Verastream helped to improve both customer and employee satisfaction. You can't underestimate the value of that for any company."



Schenker's Architecture: How Verastream Fits In

Schenker's web-development architecture, based on HTTP and XML, is essentially a form of web services. The design work for this project fell within that architecture. Verastream is installed on a Windows server. A Java application, built by the Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Group, interfaces with IBM WebSphere MQ (MQ Series). On the client side, JSPs (JavaServer Pages) retrieve and display the information from WebSphere MQ.

About Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Group

The Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Group is a world leader in management consulting and IT services. It employs more than 56,500 people in Europe, North America, and the Asia-Pacific region and offers these client services:

- Management and technology consulting
- Systems transformation
- Systems management (outsourcing)
- Local professional services

Through these services, CGE&Y helps clients develop and transform their organizations.

About Verastream Integration Solutions

The Attachmate Verastream product line accelerates the reuse of legacy applications in service-oriented architectures. This suite of solutions provides a complete range of mainframe, web, and desktop modernization tools—from basic rejuvenation to customized presentation and sophisticated high-performance integration. Verastream-generated services can be mixed, matched, and reused selectively to extend legacy functionality to new users or new composite applications. No code changes to legacy applications are required, so you can avoid risk while speeding up application integration, application development, and workflow enhancement.

About Attachmate

Attachmate helps businesses extend, manage, and secure their IT investments. We offer a broad range of solutions—from terminal emulation, legacy integration, and PC lifecycle management products to innovative systems and security management tools. With our technology, more than 65,000 businesses worldwide are putting their IT assets to work in new and meaningful ways. Learn more at www.attachmate.com.



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