



KL CONSULTING

KL Consulting Delivers Intelligence to Business Objects' Sales Force

The Right Info at the Right Time Gives Users an Edge

When Business Objects decided it needed a corporate sales intranet to empower its sales force, implementing one proved to be easier said than done. KL Consulting Principal, Karilee Wirthlin, however, leveraged her experience with large enterprise customers to devise a solution designed to meet the unique requirements of Business Objects' sales personnel.

Customer Background

Prior to working with KL Consulting, the San Jose, Calif.-based company tried to create a workable solution in-house, but failed. "We learned some important lessons [from those efforts]," said Joe Scheuermann, Director of Worldwide Field Operations at Business Objects. "We realized that we needed to take a step back and evaluate our goals at a very objective level. We figured out that we needed to hire someone who had previous experience succeeding in what we were trying to do, who wasn't clouded by historical projects and who could provide us with concrete recommendations about the best way to proceed in order to achieve our goals."

In 2003, the company had a sales force of about 1,000 people. Of course, sales personnel are an essential component of any company's success, and Business Objects realized that empowering their sales force with targeted and appropriate information was critical to their ability to thrive.

The Challenge

The company wanted a site that was intuitive and easy to use and that met all the requirements of the sales department. When asked, the salespeople admitted that some of the information on the original site wasn't really useful to them, while crucial data was unavailable. "In the past, the site was produced by the marketing department, with little or no input from the sales force that was the end customer for the Web site," said Scheuermann. "It didn't take into account the requirements that salespeople had for an effective sales tool.

Mid-project, the intranet's complexity increased dramatically when Business Objects acquired Crystal Decisions, an enterprise reporting software developer. "The acquisition was a major curveball," said Scheuermann. "We had to stop and take a few steps back and come up with a new plan... Karilee was a huge part of that. We had to broaden the audience that we were working with to include the new sales force."

Almost overnight, the intranet's potential user base shot up from 1,000 to nearly 2,500. Business Objects realized that scalability and the ability to change the site's architecture over time were of a paramount concern. To address those concerns, Karilee helped Business Objects create a methodology for categorizing and segmenting information so it would be easy to adapt over time.

"The biggest take-away from this process for us was learning how to really see the organization of the site through the eyes of the user," said Jennifer Drummond, Sales Intranet Manager at Business Objects. "The site that exists today is a user-driven site that is organized by how the users really think, as opposed to how we want them to think."

One example of user driven changes: Traditionally, site information was based on company infrastructure, which put product information in a product category and partner news under a partnership category. Today, information is more strategically organized based upon how salespeople use it—so pricing information is placed under sales support, rather than in a product section.

The KL Consulting Approach

Karilee worked with Business Objects to evaluate the existing Web site and create an action plan for gathering data about the direction that the new site would take. Next, she interviewed both sales and marketing personnel about what they would like to get out of a new site and exactly how they would use the sales intranet.

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- Don Macauley, Sales Intranet, Technical Lead

“The best thing about this project was how much of the research was done up front,” said Don Macauley, technical business owner of the site at Business Objects. “Typically, it is difficult to gather a significant and well-documented body of research and information because everyone is focused on getting things done quickly. However, we wouldn’t have been half as successful as we were without the work that KL Consulting did.”

“Our decision to hire Karilee Wirthlin was primarily based on her previous experience,” said Scheuermann. “Some of her other projects, such as the work that she did for PeopleSoft, was closely aligned with what we were looking to do. In addition, she was local, and readily available to commit to our project full time.”

The key to the success of the project was capturing real-life information about the needs of the users. “Karilee did an exercise where sales and marketing folks would sort content and categories with the objective of creating the data schema for the Web site,” said Scheuermann. “This approach allowed us to get input from the sales department on a global basis, including inside sales, pre-sales, enterprise sales and marketing. They told us how they would want data to be organized if they were designing the site.”

KL Consulting also helped Business Objects translate the needs of the sales people who would be using the site into an executable technology plan. “Karilee has an excellent track record of creating sales intranets because she understands sales and marketing, as well as the technical side of things,” said Kathi Kaplan, Vice President of Americas Marketing at Business Objects.

The Bottom Line

The site, dubbed Sales Central, went live in January 2004. “The feedback that we’ve gotten on the content and organization of the new site has been positive,” said Drummond. “The new site is definitely more intuitive for users.”

The newly revamped site is populated with a huge amount of data, including 2,000 documents, as well as 800 pages of content migrated from the original sales intranet. “The site is an information portal for our sales people, to help them drive revenue,” said Macauley. “We are expecting that the salespeople will use it as their home page.”

Although the huge number of changes that occurred in the wake of the Crystal Decisions acquisition made quantifying the impact of the new intranet difficult, the company found that it enhanced the communication and efficiency of the sales force. “The old site, which was a corporate marketing site that wasn’t sales-centric, made it difficult for me to support the field or even communicate with them,” said Kaplan. “Today, everything is different. We have a site that is clearly developed and designed for them—and the information they need is right there.”

About Business Objects

Business Objects is the world's leading business intelligence software company. Business intelligence enables organizations to track, understand, and manage enterprise performance. The company's solutions leverage the information that is stored in an array of corporate databases, enterprise resource planning (ERP), and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. In December 2003, Business Objects completed the acquisition of Crystal Decisions, the leader in enterprise reporting. The combined product line includes software for reporting, query and analysis, performance management, analytic applications, and data integration. In addition, Business Objects offers consulting and education services to help customers effectively deploy their business intelligence projects.

Business Objects has more than 24,000 customers in more than 80 countries. The company's stock is traded under the ticker symbols NASDAQ: BOBJ and Euronext Paris (ISIN: FR0004026250 - BOB). It is included in the SBF 120 and IT CAC 50 French stock market indexes. For more information on Business Objects or any of its products, visit the company Web site at www.businessobjects.com.

About Karilee Wirthlin of KL Consulting

Karilee Wirthlin, principal and founder of KL Consulting in Silicon Valley, California, is a leading web site strategy consultant who combines her sales support experience with her technical background to produce innovative, targeted, and effective web content management programs. She has worked with companies such as PeopleSoft, Business Objects, Adobe, NVIDIA, and SGI applying best practices to large-scale, strategic web site efforts and has worked with web content management systems since their emergence in 1998.