

ENABLING TECHNOLOGIES

July 2009

Siemens Enterprise Communications Uses B2B Technology To Help Partners Get the Message Out

by Dennis Gaughan

Adrian Honey, director of marketing for **Siemens**, had a problem. How do you ensure that your company's values and product strengths are consistently communicated to customers across 85 countries in 11 languages? And how do you do it when those responsible for delivering the message to prospective customers don't work for you and sell your competitors' products as well?

The Siemens Enterprise Communications group has over 2,000 active partners selling products around the globe. Some partners are large, some very small, but they're all important to fuel the company's growth strategy.

This challenge is common for high-tech companies that sell through distributor and value-added reseller (VAR) channels. Inconsistent communication of product details and marketing messages can lead to customer confusion, and the inability of channel partners to take advantage of marketing materials can lead to lost revenue for the brand owner.

Consistent content and partner buy-in the key challenges

There were a number of business challenges, both internal and external, that Siemens Enterprise Communications faced in trying to get messages to customers:

- **Portfolio complexity**—Unified communications products are broad and incorporate a number of different technologies under one banner. Combined with a large network of partners, this created lots of complexity when trying to deliver consistent content.
- **Different levels of maturity in the partner network**—Siemens Enterprise Communications has to rely heavily on the partners to reach customers,

especially those that are small or midsize. There's a wide spectrum of maturity on how the partners take advantage and present the company's messages.

- **Regional marketing**—Siemens Enterprise Communications is trying to present a consistent message across the globe. Sometimes the company's local staff would adjust the content outside the guidelines of what corporate marketing was trying to accomplish.

On top of this, channel partners are inherently wary. There's constant fear of disintermediation, so partners need to be assured the company is not looking to replace them, but rather equip them with a much richer toolset.

Finding the right software partner

Attempts to internally develop technology for distributing marketing content didn't yield the desired results. The team decided to look for alternatives in the market, initially pursuing some outsourcing options, but they also fell short of expectations. Siemens Enterprise Communications had been working with **TIE Kinetix** in a few geographies and decided to take a closer look at the technology to see if it could meet its global requirements.

What the company found wasn't exactly what it was looking for, but there were a number of factors that made the TIE Kinetix platform appealing:

- **Platform flexibility**—The platform didn't have all the required business functionality Siemens Enterprise Communications sought, but the company did recognize the flexibility of the platform would allow it to adapt to meet business requirements. It also liked what it saw in terms of scalability to support its global needs.
- **Company flexibility**—The company also noted TIE's willingness to work toward delivering the ultimate solution. It's been able to influence the product development roadmap as a result. One example is improvements to the user interface, which the company noted wasn't as robust when the two started working together.

The implementation is still ongoing, and Siemens Enterprise Communications has a goal to get 70% of its partners connected through the TIE Kinetix Content Syndication Platform (CSP). But the company is already starting to see the results. For instance, it can now deliver a globally consistent set of content in multiple languages. In addition, the sign-up process for bringing partners into the platform is fully automated, eliminating a lot of the manual effort required in the past.

The payback isn't just about content delivery and reduced administration for Siemens Enterprise Communications—it's starting to pay dividends for partners as well. For example, a reseller in Germany was initially skeptical of a new marketing portal as a vehicle for supporting outbound marketing to prospects, especially because it required integrating prospect lists into the B2B tool. The company took a leap of faith and was rewarded with an immediate payoff: the ability to reach 2,000 prospects with effective collateral and equip its sales force with 50 highly qualified prospects within a week.

Lessons learned

Overall, Siemens Enterprise Communications has been happy with the results of the collaboration with TIE Kinetix. Its partners are starting to see the benefits as well. Partners are embracing the portal, and the company is seeing a noticeable increase in traffic to its websites as a result.

There are a number of key lessons learned that apply not just to high-tech companies, but to any industry looking to engage its channels to ensure message consistency to the end customer:

- Work closely with the partner community to understand how it wants to consume marketing material and what capabilities are most important. It's also crucial to reinforce that these efforts are meant to enhance the channel, not replace it.
- Recognize and appreciate the cultural differences in a global deployment, not just between the brand owner and partners, but with the vendor as well. The automation of a partner portal can help deliver consistent content. However, there should still be some flexibility to tailor to local needs.