

Client



Company:

ICOM Information & Communications L.P.

Website:

www.i-com.com

Headquarters:

Toronto, Ontario

Industry:

List Sales & Data Services

Size:

300 employees

Solution:

Alterian Engine and Studio with Data Discovery & Visualization Module and Custom Applications, part of the Alterian Integrated Marketing Platform

Results:

Alterian helped ICOM raise its list output by 40% and significantly increase revenue with no increase in staff.

“Consumer surveys are the basis of ICOM’s data. Turnaround time to build consumer targeting strategies is now measured in minutes rather than hours.”

Christy DeMont
Chief Information Officer

Database Revamp Speeds ICOM Query Turnaround and List Output with Alterian

Alterian and ICOM collaborate to build a high-performance intuitive database system, increasing list output, revenue, and resulting in more than 80% of ICOM’s database queries running in less than 2 minutes.

ICOM is based in Toronto, Ontario. A leader in targeted marketing, ICOM provides high quality consumer response lists, data communication products and analytic services to help marketers find and reach the right consumers with the right message at the right time. Its clients, mainly consumer packaged goods, pharmaceutical and direct mail marketers in the United States and Canada, rely on ICOM as a valued source of hard to find data and consumer insights that drive the success of their marketing programs.

At the core is ICOM’s TargetSource® - North America’s largest self reported consumer responder database, detailing a wealth of information including purchase behaviors and intentions; lifestyles, hobbies and interests; product ownership and demographics - with over 26 million US households (and 40 million adult consumers) collected in the past 24 months.

The Challenge

The company’s ability to develop customized database queries to generate the best-performing marketing lists was essential to its success. But in 2003, ICOM realized it had outgrown its in-house database querying system and began to look for a better one.

“Our legacy system had become cumbersome and slow,” said Christy DeMont, ICOM Chief Information Officer, “[Our] customers were demanding quicker turnaround,” and ICOM was concerned about losing competitive advantage.

ICOM needed speed, but sourcing increasingly complex customer orders from the company’s consumer database also demanded a high degree of flexibility. ICOM faced an additional challenge because of ongoing updates to the questions on its consumer surveys to respond to new marketplace demands for information.

The project objective was to give ICOM list professionals fast, flexible query setup and execution, allowing them to create, save and modify targeting strategies quickly and efficiently. With the existing solution, orders typically were fulfilled within three days. ICOM needed to fulfill orders in a matter of hours.

ICOM first formed a team of business and technology users to build a set of requirements. The new solution would need to handle large data volumes, process queries swiftly to increase order turnaround and

accommodate data complexity. ICOM also needed intuitive user tools and database and application scalability. Finally, ICOM wanted a solution that ran in a client/server application environment.

The Solution

The company considered in-house development and evaluated outside software providers and products, and chose Alterian. Alterian provided the data warehouse and the database engine as well as advanced tools for loading, verifying and accessing the data. ICOM designed a custom user interface and list creation processes that provided a seamless end-to-end tool and workflow for analysis, identification and extraction of consumer data and lists.

The team overcame numerous technical challenges. For example, the data’s size and dynamic nature demanded the ability to rebuild and update a very large database within narrow processing windows. This was accomplished through the development of a multistage data loading process that extended the existing Alterian iLoader tool. The solution also had to provide flexibility to query different survey questions in different ways. But the biggest challenge “was to increase query speed without losing flexibility,” DeMont said.

The new system has made database queries more intuitive. “Whereas once ICOM list professionals needed to intimately learn the structure and location of specific data fields and values on TargetSource®, they now query against a master list or use keywords to optimize list targeting and counts for their clients,” DeMont said. “ICOM staff did not need to master advanced technology even though the database itself supported new complexities of data analysis.”

Besides increasing list output and revenue, more than 80 percent of ICOM’s database queries now run in less than 2 minutes. “These same queries used to take several hours, resulting in a lengthy order fulfillment process,” DeMont said.

The Benefits

The Alterian database capabilities let ICOM accommodate custom requests and ongoing product opportunities and improvements. For example, based on the success of this solution, and the needs of ICOM’s customers, the company introduced ICOM TargetSource® Refreshed in 2004, which gives access to

Alterian Case Study

ICOM Information & Communications L.P.

information on an additional 34 million consumers and 23 million households collected before the most recent 24 months. The introduction of this new product took the organization only eight weeks to complete from inception to production, DeMont said. "We would not have been able to bring this product to market that quickly if we did not have the Alterian solution as a foundation to build on".

Alterian

Alterian (LSE: ALN) empowers marketers with an integrated marketing software platform combining database, online and operational marketing applications on a shared data infrastructure. The Alterian Integrated Marketing Platform makes it practical and cost effective for marketers to use actionable insight to execute an integrated marketing strategy across online and offline channels.

It is the unique integration of analytics, content and execution through Alterian's industry leading tools, such as the Alterian Messenger email platform, and the award winning Alterian Content Management solutions, which enables marketers to drive a seamless, multi-channel customer experience.

Alterian's analytically-led software is delivered to approximately 1,000 marketing departments, across 26 countries, and an international network of more than 100 business partners, including marketing services providers, agencies and systems integrators. Its partners, such as Accenture, Acxiom, Allant Group, Cap Gemini, Carlson Marketing, Experian, Epsilon, InfoUSA, LogicaCMG, Merkle, Ogilvy One and Euro RSCG Worldwide, deliver Alterian software alongside their own domain and services expertise to help market leaders such as Princess Cruises, General Motors, Zurich, Astra Zeneca, HSBC, Limited Too, AEGON, Avis, Worldwide Wrestling Entertainment, Dell, Amnesty International and Vodafone integrate marketing processes and drive competitive advantage.

For more information about Alterian, products within the Alterian Integrated Marketing Platform or our Partner Network, please visit www.alterian.com

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