

Neopost Uses DQ*Plus for Oracle and Siebel to Improve Customer Experience

Data Quality effort generates impressive ROI

Founded in 1924, Neopost is the largest supplier of mailing systems in Europe and the second largest worldwide. With 14 subsidiaries, primarily in Europe and America, and 4,700 employees, it conducts business in 90 countries and has over 800,000 customers. Its core business is providing mailing meters. "We provide end-to-end solutions that help companies reduce their costs and improve productivity throughout the mailing process," said Mia Leondakis, Vice President of Customer Strategy.

Customer Experience

About 18 months ago, Neopost established Leondakis' role to ensure that Neopost customers have an excellent experience by providing the right processes, systems and information at the right time. Leondakis' team works with all the functional units in the company--sales, service, operations, marketing and so on. "Different groups within the company handle different parts of the overall customer relationship. We wanted to ensure that our end-to-end processes were customer focused and were supported with the highest quality data," Leondakis said.

To address that goal, Neopost established a data governance effort with participation across the company. Each operational group is responsible for the quality of data within its own area and Carol J. Buckreus, Data Governance Program Manager, oversees the coordination of the entire operation. "We are working towards having excellent customer data for all key data elements and attributes," Buckreus said. "The key goals are to know who our customers are; where they are located; the products they

have and the services they are entitled to, so that we can truly achieve customer excellence."

Establishing the Program

The first step in establishing the data governance program was inviting a consultant to review the current situation. The consultant recommended the company establish data governance standards; hire a manager to supervise the data governance program and to acquire appropriate data governance software. "We looked at several tools to see what the best fit was for the company," Leondakis said.

Neopost opted for DQ*Plus, a next generation data quality platform that cleans data and consolidates duplicate customer records within enterprise applications. The platform is offered by Stalworth Inc., a data quality software company. "DQ*Plus was the most flexible tool and was also easy to implement," Leondakis said. "It provided the most functionality in a cost effective way."

DQ*Plus automatically cleans data in customer databases, keeps it constantly clean, and prevents bad data from being entered. DQ*Plus also identifies and merges duplicate records, preserving the best data from each record. DQ*Plus has application connectors for Oracle and Siebel, as well as all of the major database platforms. DQ*Plus provides address correction for more than 200 countries, including CASS™ certification for U.S. addresses. DQ*Plus helps companies manage and optimize their customer data, providing solutions for address and phone number validation, postal encoding and data enhancements.

Implementation

Neopost established a roadmap for implementing DQ*Plus. Working with a DQ*Plus consultant, a cross-functional team determined the business rules defining how to best cleanse the data.

"The consultant was very responsive and managed the knowledge transfer to our permanent IT staff," Buckreus said.

The first milestone achieved was running DQ*Plus in batch mode with the company's Oracle ERP system. The next step is to apply DQ*Plus to the company's Siebel CRM system to cleanse prospect records. That will be followed by the implementation of persistent processing, in which data cleansing and de-duping take place as records are touched. The final step is interactive processing, which works with users inside their applications to prevent the entry of bad data as it is being entered.

Interestingly, although Neopost developed a careful roadmap, a series of acquisitions has led to the application of DQ*Plus in unanticipated ways. "We realized that we could use DQ*Plus to cleanse and dedupe the data as we import it into our system," Leondakis said. "We were able to improve the quality of our data from day one. It is making a huge difference."

Impressive ROI

The implementation of DQ*Plus has resulted in an impressive ROI. When postal rates increase, Neopost must update their customers' software. In the wake of the governance program, after the last rate increase, Neopost was able to cut the number of update shipments by as much as 25 percent and significantly cut the return rate as well. The customer experience was greatly enhanced. "Over 98 percent of Neopost customers received their software updates on time, at the right location," said Leondakis.

Neopost continues to systematically improve its data through the data governance efforts. "We have made big strides in the first year," Leondakis said. "And we continue to refine the process."