



Always Thinking Ahead

Prepaid calling solution boosts Telecom Italia Mobile's market share

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Telecom Italia Mobile (TIM) is Europe's largest and fastest-growing cellular operator, with more than 15 million subscribers, a 30 percent annual growth rate, and an extensive mobile network across the continent.

TIM's success stems largely from its ability to quickly capitalize on emerging opportunities in mobile communications. Often, Compaq is there, helping TIM get to market first with strategic services.

‘PREPARE FOR LAUNCH’

When TIM was planning to launch an innovative, prepaid calling service for mobile communications customers, the carrier turned to Compaq Services for assistance. Working with ORGA, Compaq's Communications Industry Solutions practice developed a basic customer care and billing (CC&B) production system in less than six months and an enhanced, full-featured solution in just three more months.

The service was an instant success. In fact, TIM captured an astonishing 70 percent share of a fast-growing market. As important, TIM defined a whole new way of doing business with its customers.

A NEW WAY TO DO BUSINESS

As Roberto Pellegrini, TIM's commercial executive director, explained, “When we first envisioned a prepaid mobile calling service, we realized it would require us to take a whole new approach in three critical areas: billing and payment, service activation, and customer service.” For example, with standard mobile communications, the user purchases a contract and pays a bi-monthly service fee plus calling charges.

With the prepaid service, the user visits one of TIM's 2,500 retail dealers and buys a prepaid smart card that is pre-registered on TIM's GSM network. The card allows the user to access mobile phone services worth a specified monetary value.

COMPAQ

Better answers

LIKE MONEY IN THE BANK

According to Pellegrini, this process is much like depositing money in a bank account, which can be withdrawn at any time, in any increment. To make a call, the user inserts the card in a mobile handset and accesses the TIM GSM network. Once the call is completed, the cost is immediately deducted from the prepaid account, in the same way a cash withdrawal made at an electronic banking machine is deducted from a bank account.

A FOCUS ON CUSTOMER CARE

“We knew that customer care would play a key role in the success of the new service,” said Pellegrini. “For example, users would need 24-hour access to basic services, such as current credit balances.”

To meet this need, TIM chose to implement a freephone, interactive voice response system.

DEPLOYING A BASIC SOLUTION

During the first phase of the project, which lasted about six months, Compaq developed and deployed a basic production system that could be used to test the feasibility and market acceptance of the new service. For the core of the solution, Compaq chose a customer care and billing application from ORGA running on DEC557, Tru 64 UNIX and AlphaServers. This basic solution was put into production, with a small number of customizations and a restricted list of friendly subscribers.

FULL STEAM AHEAD

After gathering feedback for several months, TIM launched the second phase of the project five months later. The carrier’s ambitious goal was to make significant enhancements to the system and deploy a full-featured service within three months. The enhancements included:

- A capability that allows a user to instantly reload a depleted account by making payment at any TIM dealer site.
- A freephone feature that allows users to change their billing plans to best accommodate their calling patterns.
- Voice response services in three languages: Italian, German, or English.

MAKING THE COMPLEX LOOK SIMPLE

“To succeed, we knew these service features would have to look extremely simple to the user,” said Pellegrini. “Yet to implement them would require immense integration expertise and project discipline.

Compaq provided us with both.” For example, Compaq coordinated the efforts of three project groups - one each in Rome, Naples, and Germany — that were responsible for different aspects of the solution.

Compaq Services Communications Industry experts also managed a major technical challenge: creating the interface that would link the voice response system and the new billing system.

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KEEPING EVERYONE ON TRACK

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SUCCESS BY ANY MEASURE

When the system was rolled out, the market response was much greater than anticipated. TIM quickly captured 70 percent of market share.

The third phase of the project — expanding capabilities to support a growing customer base — was accelerated. Again, the Compaq Communications Industry Solutions practice responded in a very short time frame.

Follow-on features developed by Compaq and ORGA include subscriptions and hot billing for roaming services, migration of mobile subscribers to prepaid cards through billing system integration, family group tariff profiles, and automatic bank account credit reloading and debiting.

“As a young company, TIM struggles with all the issues that result from rapid growth,” said Pellegrini. “Compaq has been an excellent partner for us. They are attuned with our fast-moving, innovative style of business. Yet they also provide the maturity, discipline, and global resources of a major corporation. Compaq has been a significant role in TIM’s successful growth.”

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