



## Customer Service Improvements Increase IPC's Value Chain for Subway® Restaurant Owners

*Courteous service and consistently providing fresh sandwiches are at the heart of every SUBWAY restaurant. In fact, the company takes such pride in its stance that its advertising slogan touts the mantra "Eat fresh."*

*Independent Purchasing Cooperative (IPC) plays a pivotal role in supporting by managing a value-based food service supply chain that delivers superior returns to 11,000 SUBWAY franchisees. Technology plays a pivotal role in this supply chain as evidenced by IPC's trading partner network, innovative sales tools and electronic card program. Because it is 100% owned by franchisees, IPC must create value in the services they deliver to owners. As a service organization, IPC recognizes the critical importance of addressing and resolving customer issues in a timely, accurate and professional manner.*

### **Solution: Moving from "make do" to "can do"**

Meeting SUBWAY's expectations meant IPC needed top-notch management of key issues:

Card programs: A newly implemented Gift card program – and management of an existing loyalty card program – brought high customer demand for IPC to handle card issues and placed a serious burden on them to respond efficiently.

Customer service: Efforts to address issues were being duplicated and the process was managed manually. There was no real control of customer service, so issues were falling through the cracks.

Centralization: IPC needed a system to centralize customer issues and eliminate redundancies. IPC had no way to know or track if multiple resources were working independently to resolve the same customer issue.

With a holiday season quickly approaching, IPC expected higher volume demands, which meant they more support resources. They decided the timing was right for CRM.

### **Evaluating the options**

IPC knew the functionality of a CRM system would be a tremendous help for their service desk and main call center.

"We knew a CRM solution was needed – and quickly," says Carman Wenkoff, president of card services.

"The electronic gift cards and credit card programs we manage are mission critical at all levels and we have to be positioned to serve our customers well. Our electronic card programs are designed to increase speed and convenience for SUBWAY franchisees. This enables us to create unique marketing and promotional opportunities to increase service levels and drive customer loyalty within these programs."

Because IPC already had other Microsoft applications in place, they wanted to take a close look at Microsoft Dynamics CRM to see if it would fit their needs. Leveraging their knowledge and experience with other Microsoft applications would make the move to CRM a natural one.

To find the right Microsoft CRM partner, IPC developed a hit list of potential candidates that network contacts suggested. IPC culled the list by viewing vendor presentations, then narrowed down their search by creating a short list.

Customer Effective stood out from the crowd throughout the evaluation process. The IPC review team immediately recognized Customer Effective's deep product knowledge and focus on CRM. Customer Effective further distinguished themselves from competitors by displaying a strong record of successful CRM implementations.

Wenkoff reflects that Customer Effective nailed IPC's primary issues right away and showed IPC exactly what CRM could do for them. These factors combined to make IPC's decision to go with Customer Effective an easy one.

### **Solution: Mapping out the plan**

The approaching holiday season meant IPC needed to fast track the CRM implementation. Customer Effective was up to the task, immediately mapping out the entire implementation approach and identifying key focus areas. The card service and member services groups became the two primary focal points.

Tony Ronconi, IT project manager for IPC, recalls, "We always have a busy year-end because franchise owners call us with questions about their dividends and related information. We knew call volume would be higher during this period, so it was important for us to have CRM up and running prior to this hectic season."

Customer Effective gathered all data as part of the implementation process and provided an approach for integrating CRM with an existing, in-house membership database IPC uses for tracking all franchisee information. The CRM implementation was a tremendous success and delivered right on schedule.

*“Customer Effective created a phased CRM implementation plan which made perfect sense for us,”* says Carman Wenkoff, president of card services. *“They showed us what was essential to get started, what needed to be prioritized and how everything would come together. The plan worked perfectly to meet our expectations.”*

IPC uses CRM to track all customer calls, emails and questions from initial inquiry through resolution. This includes the time involved to handle issues so that all activity related to it is captured. Everything is documented in one place because CRM tracks it all.

IPC has deployed CRM in three primary areas:

1 – Franchise stores support – This is a key area where any issues regarding the gift card program are resolved for customers in the U.S. and Canada. These issues range from reconciliation of financial transactions for each store to questions about the do’s and don’ts of the card program.

2 – Consumer support – IPC handles franchisee questions at the store level from consumers who use the card program. These questions often pertain to how the cards are used and how transactions are handled to determine if cards are functioning properly or need to be replaced.

3 – Interdepartmentally – CRM tracks issues between marketing, product development, management, administration and IT . This fosters clear communications between all internal departments and prevents duplication of tasks or redundant activities to resolve customer issues.

### Seeing the results

IPC now logs 200-300 entries in CRM every 1-2 days – a fraction of the time it took when issues were captured manually. Users access CRM daily within IPC’s member and card services groups, and about half of these are considered ‘power users’ who intimately know the system. This level of activity helps IPC ensure that customers are being cared for and that responses to issues are fully documented, tracked and managed.

*“CRM enables us to identify whether an issue occurs for the first time with a customer, if it is a repeat of an occurrence or if multiple issues are involved,”* says Mickey Itchon, IT support for Value Pay Services at IPC. *“Call handling efficiency has improved tremendously. We now know who called and what action took place to handle an issue because everything is logged in CRM.”*

Moving from a manual process to CRM has greatly reduced the overall effort needed to handle calls. Not only has time been saved, but call center efficiency has increased. IPC is able to drill down into the specifics of a problem area and capture everything pertaining to the issue. In return, the entire IPC team is able to access this data to efficiently resolve similar issues in the future.

*“Service levels are the highest they have ever been,”* says Wenkoff. *“IPC is truly able to back up our mission statement which aims at providing superior returns to SUBWAY franchisees. We credit CRM for giving us the ability to deliver. Partnering with Customer Effective to make this happen within a tight time frame has proven to be a smart move.”*

### Planning for the future

The next level of CRM for IPC involves assigning experts to specific issue areas. This will enable an expert to be immediately identified when an issue is logged in CRM. Additionally, data analysis and reporting will help improve future planning, budgeting and support activities.

*“Complaints from franchisees have plummeted since we implemented CRM,”* says Wenkoff. *“We rarely receive complaints now because our responsiveness to customer issues has greatly improved. We’ve completely turned around this area in our company.”*

The 11,000 SUBWAY franchise owners throughout the U.S. and Canada agree. Ultimately, a satisfied SUBWAY consumer leads to a satisfied franchise owner. As long as IPC continues to provide the innovative technology-based solutions and marketing tools to support their clients, the value chain IPC manages will keep their customers heads above the competition.

*For more information, visit [www.CustomerEffective.com](http://www.CustomerEffective.com)*

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