

Mainline Provides the Fuel for Success at Alabama Gas Corporation



Excellence in customer service is a hallmark of Alabama Gas Corporation. However, as an ever-expanding business with increasing consumer demands, Alabama Gas needed to update their legacy systems and create a more flexible, useful software solution for customer service.

Thanks to Mainline Solution Services, the customer service team now has the technology to effectively serve customers in a timely manner.

As the largest natural gas distributor in Alabama, Alagasco, officially known as Alabama Gas Corporation, serves over of 463,000 customers in nearly 200 communities. On October 14, 2002, Alabama Gas celebrated 150 years in business, and today has more than 1,000 employees located in seven operating divisions.

The Challenge:

Alabama Gas employees know the customer is number one. As a result, they strive to locate information quickly, answer questions in detail, and provide for an altogether positive customer service experience. However, due to an increasing customer base, price changes, and a significant seasonal spike in customer calls, Alabama Gas was finding it increasingly difficult to provide the quality customer service their customers have come to expect and appreciate. The existing solution had served Alabama Gas well, but was in need of updating in order to be an effective customer service and call center tool.

In addition, there was a steep learning curve with the existing customer service information application that frustrated new employees. The application was comprised of more than 500 screens of data and required constant switching between screens due to the limitation of green screens to organize information in an easily accessible manner. As a result, it took an average of three months for customer service reps to become functional in using the application.

In an effort to remedy these issues, Lynn Lovelady, Manager of Enterprise Applications, and his team began a search for a CRM solution. It was in the midst of this search that they received an email from Mainline with information on an offering that, although not a CRM solution, would solve their customer service application issues.

The Solution Strategy and Implementation:

The particular Mainline offering that came across Lovelady's desk focused on an IBM WebSphere Host Modernization Solution, which included both HATS and Host Publisher. Upon meeting with Mainline, it quickly became apparent to Lovelady that the proposed solution was able to meet the application functionality requirements for the customer service call center. "At first blush, it seemed Host Modernization could meet our call center needs as well as, or better than any other solution we had evaluated, and at a fraction of the cost of other options. Upon completion of a proof-of-concept, we knew we had found our solution," said Lovelady.

IBM WebSphere Host Modernization, along with WebSphere Studio Application Developer, would solve call center problems by taking critical information in legacy systems from green screens to browser-based viewing. The database would be easily navigated, the information would be quickly accessed and viewed, and the interface would be user friendly, removing the three-month learning curve that existed with the current application.

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Business Benefits and Solution Results

(continued from other side)



Lynn Lovelady and his enterprise management team are quite pleased with the Host Modernization solution results.

"The customer service representatives report almost immediate understanding of the application," explained Lovelady. "The most frequently accessed information is viewable via tabs, making it simple for representatives to locate data and answer questions without bouncing between screens."

As of the close of 2003, only the customer service representatives were using the application. However, plans are in the works to roll it out to the remaining employee base. "We have had a number of requests from employees to expand the use of the WebSphere Host Modernization application solution because it is so user friendly. WebSphere lives up to its promises as a solution, and Mainline lives up to their promises as a solution service provider. The people and quality of service is what sets Mainline apart from other solution service providers," concludes Lovelady.

About Mainline:

The technology you need, provided by the people you want to work with.
This is the Mainline Difference.

Mainline Information Systems became IBM's leading partner across the eServer and storage product lines by ensuring our customers have the best-designed and supported solutions to meet their individual business requirements. Mainline delivers software, hardware, and application solutions, as well as a comprehensive suite of services to a growing base of more than 4,000 satisfied customers. There is no need for you to segment your technology among various vendors creating fragmented, ineffective results when Mainline offers comprehensive, integrated solutions.

Not only can we offer complete solutions, but we also have the best people in the industry with extensive technical skills and experience. All of this adds up to what we call the Mainline Difference: the technology solutions you need, provided by the people you want to work with.

Five years in a row, Mainline has been ranked by Inc. Magazine as one of the 500 fastest growing privately held companies. Scoring within the top 25 for three of the five years has put Mainline in the elite category of Inc. Magazine's "Superstar" corporations, a position held by only three companies.

Mainline is set apart from other solution providers by our experience, our solutions, and our people.

We invite you to find out more about the Mainline difference.

Visit our website at <http://www.mainline.com> or call toll free at 1.800.811.4429



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