

SUN RISES HIGHER WITH ORACLE'S ADVANCED CUSTOMER SERVICES



Sun Microsystems, Inc.
Santa Clara, CA
www.sun.com

Industry:

Technology

Annual Revenue:

\$13.07 Billion

Employees:

34,600

Oracle Products & Services:

Oracle Premier Support
Oracle Advanced Customer Services
Oracle Solution Support Center
Oracle Database Enterprise Edition
Oracle Real Application Clusters (RAC)
Oracle E-Business Suite applications:
 Oracle Manufacturing
 Oracle Financials
 Oracle Projects
 Oracle Customer Relationship Management
 Oracle Advanced Procurement
 Oracle Human Resources Management

Key Benefits:

- Improved business results by aligning strategic and technical priorities
- Efficiency improvements reduced problem resolution time from months to days/hours
- Lowered costs and risks using proactive services, education, and training

“Our experience with Oracle’s Advanced Customer Services team has been exceptional. Having a dedicated Solution Support Center team means our upgrade issues are given priority early on, so problems get resolved faster. And the synergy between our IT group and the Solution Support Center has resulted in efficiency and process improvements that have had a measurable impact on our business.”

John Will, PhD, Director of Configuration Engineering, Sun Microsystems

When the earth revolves around you, you’re obviously doing something right. At least that’s how the folks at Sun Microsystems must be feeling lately. After several challenging years, the Silicon Valley icon regained market share in 2006, launched several new products and services, and formed a strategic partnership with Intel. With all the positive news, it appears Sun’s star is once again on the rise.

Helping to fuel that rise is Sun’s company-wide upgrade to Oracle’s E-Business Suite 11i, from procurement to payroll and beyond. Recognizing that great software also needs great support to drive upgrade success, Sun turned to Oracle’s Solution Support Center, one of Oracle’s Advanced Customer Services, to take on the task. As an enhancement to Oracle Premier Support, the Solution Support Center delivers Oracle’s highest level of proactive, personalized support from a dedicated Service Delivery Manager along with a team of Service Delivery Engineers and Oracle technical experts available 24/7.

By simplifying and streamlining the upgrade process, the Solution Support Center has helped Sun improve alignment between its business and IT priorities, accelerate the adoption of new Oracle technologies, and minimize the cost and risk of change.

Sun's Business Beams Brighter with Upgrade Guidance from the Solution Support Center

As Director of Configuration Engineering, John Will heads up the group that manages Sun’s online ordering and configuration

“Before undertaking any software upgrade, we work closely with the Solution Support Center team to assess the risks involved. They’ve been instrumental in helping us flag issues in advance, and ensuring quick resolution if and when problems do come up.”

Dr. John Will, Director
of Configuration
Engineering,
Sun Microsystems

system. The Configurator, as Will calls it, enables Sun’s customers to enter their system specifications over the web, and then matches this information to a set of product or service options. Handling more than 3,600 orders each day, the Configurator is critical to both Sun’s and its customers’ business continuity.

That’s why Oracle and Sun work closely together to understand the rewards and risks of every upgrade, update, or release. With version 11.5.10, for example, Will leaned heavily on Oracle’s Solution Support Center to evaluate the business and technical impact of the Configurator upgrade. “The Solution Support Center helped us reduce our upgrade planning effort by approximately 50%. We relied on them to communicate the benefits, and to walk us through any potential pitfalls,” says Will. “Upgrades always have cascading effects, so you have to understand the impact on everything down the line, from the operating system to the supporting applications. The Solution Support Center team gave us this context, which simplified the process and eliminated the risk of unplanned disruptions.”

Beyond the planning stage, the Solution Support Center team works closely with Sun throughout the upgrade cycle to ensure maximum results. During the transformation and testing stages, for instance, the Solution Support Center team identifies patch sets that provide improved reliability, performance, and certification compliance. They then provide patch assessment reports with detailed recommendations on dependencies, merging techniques, required patches or version levels from other vendors, patch application sequence guidance, and more. “This holistic approach makes our upgrades much smoother and more efficient, saving us a lot of headaches and expense,” says Will.

Efficiency Improvements Take Sun Out of the Shadows

Helping Sun save expense *and* time is one of the key functions of its dedicated Service Delivery Manager (SDM). A full-time resource available to all Solution Support Center customers, the SDM provides personalized support management and expert advice to ensure upgrades go smoothly. With deep understanding of the customer’s business and technical priorities, the SDM is equal parts guru, counselor, and solution provider, calling on an extended team of service engineers, developers, and subject-matter experts as needed.

For Will, the SDM, along with this focused team of Service Delivery Engineers, has been critical to improving his team's productivity and efficiency. "The greatest value in having a dedicated team of experts is that you don't have to restart the conversation all over again every time you want to talk about an issue," says Will. "You already have the record of where you're at and you carry on from there." As a result, problem resolution time at Sun has been significantly reduced. According to Will, upgrade issues that used to take months to resolve—prior to the Solution Support Center—now only take days or even hours to fix.

Another advantage of the SDM is the quarterly reviews they deliver to Sun covering everything from best practices to performance assessments and beyond. "Our SDM is excellent at reducing the 'friction factor' in providing support," says Will.

Proactive Services Brighten the Horizon While Lowering Costs and Risks for Sun

Like all Solution Support Center customers, Sun also benefits from a number of exclusive proactive services, including performance and configuration assessments. Through these assessments, Sun is able to quickly diagnose issues, prevent future problems, and improve the efficiency of its IT resources. At the same time, Oracle's engineers get a chance to learn the idiosyncrasies of Sun's unique configuration. "It's a two-way process. The Oracle Service Delivery Engineers learn more about us, and we use this information to fine-tune our performance within the overall environment," says Will.

Sun also takes advantage of the various education and training resources available through the Solution Support Center. Webcasts, face-to-face meetings, and a custom web portal are particularly useful prior to and during important upgrades. "I've had nothing but positive comments from my team on how valuable these sessions have been," says Will. "Each seminar is tailored to the kind of things we're concerned about. And they get us up to speed quickly on product capabilities without us having to fish through a lot of documentation."

These educational resources, combined with preferential access to events such as Oracle OpenWorld, provide Sun with ample opportunities to influence future product design and to interact with peers. "It's gratifying," says Will, "to see that the next generation technologies are in response to the needs we've identified at Sun."

Why Oracle?

Having worked closely with Oracle for over three years, Will has seen the Solution Support Center's value become more and more compelling over time. So much so that today he sees the Solution Support Center team as a seamless extension of his own group. The close partnership has helped better align his technology and business priorities, improve process efficiencies, and lower risks and costs.

“Since we've engaged Advanced Customer Services and the Solution Support Center, we have seen a huge evolution in proactive and reactive services, which has contributed immensely to the successful upgrade of the Configurator,” says Will.

Implementation

In 2005, Sun signed an enterprise license agreement to upgrade nearly all of Oracle's E-Business Suite Applications. In addition, through Advanced Customer Services, Sun uses a range of Oracle services and the Solution Support Center. Today, the company is in the process of upgrading to version 11.5.10 of the E-Business Suite on a global single instance. This suite will replace older versions of Oracle applications currently deployed across the company. Sun is also evaluating Oracle On Demand to increase logistical efficiency, control costs, and accelerate product development.

Number 211 on the Fortune 500, Sun Microsystems, Inc. (Nasdaq: SUNW) is one of world's largest technology companies, with over \$13 billion in sales and 34,000 employees worldwide.