

Foresight Consulting, Inc. Case Study

Client: Uline
Industry: Shipping supply specialists



Uline is the leading distributor of shipping, industrial, and packing materials to businesses throughout the United States. Started in 1980, Uline has steadily grown and continues to be a family owned and run business. The product line has expanded to include industrial and packaging materials, including over 1,000 shipping box sizes alone. The 358-page Uline catalog reaches businesses nationwide, offering thousands of products with quick delivery. Today, with over 1,800 employees nationwide, Uline has distribution centers near 6 major cities in the United States.

Challenge:

Uline needed a way to efficiently track the price and quality of competitor's products to ensure they stayed ahead of the marketplace. The department in charge of this process had outgrown the email-based system and needed a way to keep track of all current and historical product comparisons in an intranet based system. They also needed to distribute each comparison to several departments within the company.

They developed a manual system to distribute these product comparisons via email. As this process grew, the manual distribution became awkward due to the large number of recipients. The department also recognized that a standard document template was needed, since multiple authors were now contributing to the process. As interest outside the department grew, the need for a centralized document reference library was recognized.

Foresight Solution:

A web-based system was designed around the previous structure the department was comfortable with. It allowed users to enter pictures of competitor products as well as those of Uline and track such product statistics as size, price per unit, lead-time, shipping cost, and many others. It also provided users with a rich text format area to detail the finer points of each product. Once the information had been entered, each item would go through a review process before it was moved out of draft mode. Once it had been finalized, the comparison information would be posted to the company intranet, and notifications would be emailed to all recipients.

Benefits:

The new competitor item tracking system was well received by the users. It saved time and effort on a daily basis by allowing users to search for historical comparisons on various criteria including item number, category and competitor. By migrating this document library from email to the intranet, the previous performance load placed on the email servers was reduced. It also streamlined the process of reviewing and modifying drafts to quickly move them to being finalized. This business solution helps to keep Uline on top in an ever increasingly competitive marketplace.