



➤ Vilmorin harvests the benefits of CRM

Industry

For over 260 years, Vilmorin has played an important role in botanical and agronomical research. Today the company is specialised in the selection, production and distribution of vegetable and tree seeds to the profession. Vilmorin was already using Selligent to manage its sales force activity in France and has just implemented a new project for its international representatives.

➤ User choice

It was in 1997 that Vilmorin's team responsible for sales to producers in France first identified the need for a CRM tool. At the time, Gilles Lorain, Sales Director for France, wanted a system that could collect all the details of a client account so that the information could be located easily and synchronised between head office and the mobile sales force's laptops.

After an in-depth examination of the subject, Selligent came out on top, winning the votes of the future users. As Lorain recalls, "a number of software packages were short-listed, and the solution offered by Selligent got the thumbs up from the users because it appeared to be the easiest to use. In addition, the range of functions in Selligent went way beyond the scope of the specifications, and our users thought this wealth of function was interesting for the future."

It should be pointed out that most of the users had at the time never come close to information technology. So they first had to familiarise themselves with the computer and then with Selligent. That is why Vilmorin preferred to leave the choice up to them.



Gilles Lorain | Sales Director France

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➤ The price factor

Gilles Lorain and Christophe Ploquin, IS Project Manager, in their own pragmatic way, were concerned with keeping the budget under control. They soon realised they could contain implementation costs by doing some of the configuration work in-house. Fortunately, Vilmorin has a solid and effective internal IS team, which, for example, took care of the interface between Selligent and the Galaxia ERP tool in an Oracle environment.

➤ Training and user adoption

In view of the user profile, Vilmorin did not hesitate to give the subject of training all the attention it deserved. As Lorain explains, "in those days, a lot of projects failed largely because the users were not sufficiently trained. Training is key because it plays a major role in user adoption, which itself is a guarantee of a project's success." To start off on the right foot, Vilmorin organised a series of training sessions in small groups, spread out over several months, to make sure that everyone knew how to use the new tool.



➤ Better targeting reduces costs

The second phase of the project was the implementation of the campaign management module for domestic campaigns. Vilmorin uses Selligent to manage its events campaigns – sending the invitations, registering the attendees and following up the participation of the people registered to attend. Lorain adds, "you have to realise that in France most of our 4,000 to 5,000 customers are indirect customers. We take care of promotion, but they don't buy our products directly from us. Selligent enabled us to capitalise on the information concerning all these indirect customers. Because we have a better understanding of our customers, we can target them with more precision when it comes to sending samples and catalogues, etc. And that translates into a substantial reduction in the costs of printing and mailing our promotional literature."

➤ Two needs, one solution

In 2006, it was the turn of the export sales team to express the need for a shared tool to centralise all the information linked to its business. This sales force, comprising sales managers responsible each for a specific geographical territory, had been using office tools that did not give them a full customer history file. Even though Selligent was already installed, this did not prevent Vilmorin from creating distinct specifications for International Sales. As Lorain points out, "this is because direct sales in France and export sales are two completely different businesses. Each has its own needs and its own information streams." At the end of the day, Vilmorin stayed faithful to Selligent, but with a completely different configuration for each of its projects.

➤ Assuring international monitoring

Vilmorin's product range is extensive and becomes more so every year. In fact, the company sets aside 12% of its turnover for research and development. But bringing a new product to market is a process that can take several years, and many of the products are tested by international customers. So it is crucial to know if a product has been tested, by which customer in which country, if it has been marketed or not, and why.

With Selligent, Vilmorin can now monitor the different stages of the life cycle of all its products on the customer file. It can also extract data from Selligent and the ERP to produce tables summarising the development activity of each customer. These are then sent to customers and form the basis for discussions between area sales managers and the customers. Moreover, targeted queries give Vilmorin the ability to analyse export turnover, highlight trends and the best-selling products in each country and more. After all, exports represent over 60% of Vilmorin's turnover, and growing. So it is not surprising that this side of the business is monitored very closely.



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➤ Complete customer overview

In general, introducing Selligent has enabled Vilmorin's users to save time by reducing manual data entry. In addition, sales representative visits are better prepared, and this no doubt has a positive impact on sales volumes, even if they are more the result of the products themselves than of the service or the price. Which is why it is not possible to establish a cause-and-effect link or calculate the return on investment above and beyond the cost containment mentioned earlier.

But one thing is sure. Selligent offers Vilmorin a better overview of its sales activity, at national and international level. All the sales people now have easy access to the whole customer data, even when they are on the road. And more important still, says Lorain, "consolidating the whole customer history file, the orders placed, the events they have attended, the experiments they have carried out, etc. is crucial, especially for teams where staff turnover is high. When a sales rep leaves the company, all the data stays in place, and I can even fill in temporarily if necessary. Integrating new sales reps is also much faster."



➤ CRM maturity

While adoption of the Selligent system by sales representatives for France owed its success to the training and the communications with the teams, those responsible for export business were more accustomed to using IT tools, so they were operational much faster. The international project is currently in the build phase. "Experience has taught us not to try to include everything all at once because there is sometimes a gap between expressing a need and the way it can be translated into

a function. When we implemented our domestic project, we realised that certain developments were not actually used. This time, we are progressing stepwise to ensure that everything we introduce will really be used," Ploquin concludes.

Vilmorin has already planned its next steps, covering sales forecast monitoring, late payment monitoring and the creation of sales reports.

➤ About Selligent

Selligent, the European leader in interactive marketing and Customer Relationship Management, has been developing and marketing since 1990 operational, collaborative and analytical solutions aimed at boosting the organization, actions, and interactive communications of teams in direct contact with customers, prospects, and business relationships. Selligent solutions enable marketing, sales, services and consulting departments to develop interactive, effective, and sustainable relationships with all their contacts and ecosystems. Selligent offers a unique approach combining agility, pragmatism, and engagement, and guarantees its customers a fast and significant return on their investment.

You can find all our customer success stories on www.selligent.com/success

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