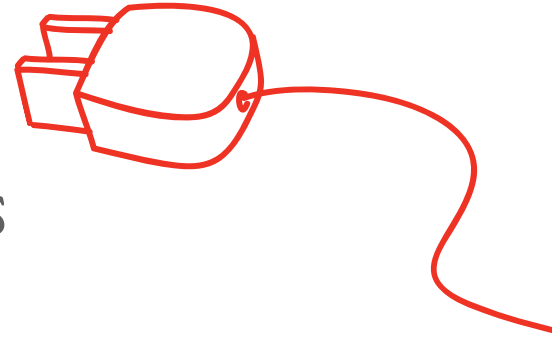


Border States Realizes the Power of the Possibilities Through Portal Technology



Border States is an ideal candidate for portal technology. Headquartered in Fargo, ND, it is the 10th largest independent electrical distributor in the United States and has distribution agreements with more than 9,000 product vendors to provide products and services to electrical construction and maintenance, industrial automation and supply, power and natural gas utilities, and data communications markets. Border States is an employee owned corporation with more than 1,200 proud owners, and 50 branch offices.

A Good Way Out

David Hinkley, Business Technology Manager of Border States Electronics, a regional provider of supply chain solutions for several markets, had seen what can go wrong with portal development first hand. Border States had begun a portal project with an outside consultant that had not gone well. “Our original portal install went very badly,” he recalls, “and it didn’t look as if there was a good way out.”

Hinkley had worked with Logicalis on successful unrelated development projects in the past, and he asked if their portal technology team could help get the portal development project back on track.

“Logicalis came in and picked up the pieces, straightened out the code, and got everything so we could move forward. They didn’t have the advantage of being able to completely re-do it,” Hinkley notes. “They had to patch up what the other company had totally screwed up. Logicalis said, ‘We can do this. We can make this work.’ And they have.”

The innovative use of technology is a major competitive advantage for Border States, and portal technology has made it possible for the company to offer a unique service to customers.

“We are very heavily tied to SAP,” Hinkley explains. “Logicalis has been able to connect to the point that our best customers can go out in their warehouse, scan the bar codes for products they need, and input the quantities through a Domino application in our portal that automatically creates an SAP order. We are providing a very convenient way for our customers to order product and cut supply chain costs. That’s what we do best: supply chain solutions. Technology is a vital part of making us unique and special to our customer base.”

Range of Capabilities

Because the range of capabilities that portal technology provides is so broad, Logicalis Consulting Services Manager Jamie Geiken says the first step Logicalis takes when discussing portal technology with a client is to ask a lot of questions.

“We do a lot more listening than leading,” Geiken says. “Our approach is to first find out what the client has that we need to connect to. It could be SAP, it could be Oracle, it could be SQL Server. It could even be a legacy MRP application in terminal emulation. We have to work with what we find. Then we have to know what the customer wants to accomplish. The potential of what we can do with tools like Lotus/Domino, Tivoli, and WebSphere is huge, but you have to build it from a strong foundation.”

Logicalis’ approach to portal technology is as important as the sophisticated tools the company employs for their clients. Logicalis’ experience and range of skills allow the company to become an extension of a client’s IT department.

Border States provides a good example: “We have development staff of our own so we aren’t looking for someone to just come in and say what do you want and then come back three months later with an application,” Hinkley says. “Logicalis’ developers

“Working together with Logicalis, we have branched into areas that we probably would not have gone into without them. You get kind of accustomed to coming up with very strange things and saying, ‘Here. This is what we want to do.’ And, with their help, we do it.”

David Hinkley, Business Technology Manager, Border States Electronics

work with our developers. We have some very good developers, but we try not to have a lot of the skills that aren't core to our IT group. We don't really need a portal developer, for example. We just need to have access to one. We don't need an expensive Notes and Domino developer. We use Logicalis to extend our capabilities there.”

Logicalis has become such an integral part of Border States' process that it can be a little difficult to know where one project starts and another ends. “We've gotten very creative with contracts and statements of work so whenever something comes up our team knows they can just call Logicalis,” Hinkley says. “Having them as an extension of our team saves us money and time. Our developers don't have to get frustrated and fume and try to find solutions. They can just call Logicalis developers and say, ‘Here is what I want.’”

Primary Constituents

The range of functionality that portal technology can make possible extends to the three primary constituents of every business: employees, customers, and partners. For example:

Employees

Portals allow employees convenient access to all information related to their jobs. Customer service reps, for example, can view a customer's last invoice, see open orders, and check the latest correspondence all from a personalized page. Sales representatives can view information such as sales, balances, past activities, and account information for their customers. Management can view results, trends, and progress of their departments. Human Resources can give employees secure self-service access to all their benefits, including insurance, payroll, and tax information.

What can we do for your organization?

Contact Logicalis to learn how we can help you realize the benefits of smart IT solutions. Visit us on the Web at www.us.logicalis.com, or call 866-456-4422 today.

Customers

Customers today are looking for better, quicker, and more accurate information from companies they choose to work with. A portal makes it possible to provide every customer a unique personalized experience. Personalized portals engage customers so closely, making doing business with your company easy and seamless. Further, choosing to do business with a competitor quickly ceases to be a practical consideration.

Partners

Portals can provide business partners with pertinent, timely information, such as contract pricing, terms and conditions, and inventory levels. Portals can also allow applications to interact with systems from other vendors, which reduces costs, eliminates duplication of effort, and increases operating efficiencies.

About Logicalis

Logicalis is an international provider of integrated information and communications technology (ICT) solutions and services founded on a superior breadth of knowledge and expertise in communications and collaboration, data center optimization, application development and integration, and outsourcing and managed services.

With its international headquarters in the UK, Logicalis Group employs more than 1,900 people worldwide, including highly trained service specialists who design, specify, deploy, and manage complex ICT infrastructures to meet the needs of more than 6,500 corporate and public sector customers. To achieve this, Logicalis maintains strong partnerships with technology leaders such as Cisco, HP, IBM, and Microsoft.

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