



IXACT Contact improves connections to sell more homes

Intel® infrastructure built by Whitecap delivers seamless solutions



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– Rich Gaasenbeek,
VP Sales and Marketing
IXACT Contact Solutions Inc.

When it comes to buying or selling a home, real estate agents’ ability to thrive is based on their database and their ability to keep their pipeline full.

Many realtors use print-based mailers to market their service. IXACT Contact Solutions Inc.* saw an opportunity to allow realtors to complement print-based marketing programs with digital campaigns with a complete customer relationship management (CRM) system that not only alerts real estate agents to key events and important dates, but creates an automated funnel of communication so they can keep in touch with customers over the long-term.

While there were existing CRM systems on the market, they were either too large with complex functionality that people weren’t using or able to understand, or were smaller regional solutions without the level of support real estate agents needed.

“We saw a hole in the market we could fill,” says IXACT Contact CTO, Jonathan Kay. “There was opportunity to come in with a software solution that is designed and architected professionally, built to be robust and scalable to any level and supported very strongly. There was lots of space there to come in with a better solution.”

“We believed there was a large opportunity in this market,” adds Rich Gaasenbeek, VP Sales and Marketing. “There are 1.2 million real estate agents in North America and a good chunk of

them needed a good real estate CRM solution. We saw an opportunity to be that solution.”

Leveraging Whitecap Canada**’s proprietary product development process, the specific functional requirements for the new solution were mapped out to ensure the end product was exactly what they needed. “We wanted to provide a drop dead simple user interface to make it really easy to use and extremely useful for a real estate agent,” says Whitecap CEO Robb Carmichael, noting they use a proprietary process called eRAD* to map out solutions before writing code. “Great software should always be designed on paper first.”

“The concept was to create a system that was more than a glorified mailing list with sophisticated functionality that was easy to learn and use,” says Palmo Venneri, Senior Project Manager at Whitecap. The system architecture is based on a series of web servers and database clusters that provide seamless integration into Microsoft Exchange* which allows seamless functionality on smart phones and tablets.

After five years, the system was reaching its maximum capacity with over 7,000 active users. Venneri notes that the addition of a popular new feature, the e-newsletter, was increasing the load on the server infrastructure, in addition to the customer growth and ever-increasing contacts, tasks and appointments being tracked and synched to all devices 24/7.

“We have been adding a lot of new features in the last five years that have really been taxing the system,” says Venneri. “The monthly newsletter has been so phenomenally successful that every month, all the agents want to immediately send it out to their contacts, which can number from a few to over a thousand. We have been putting more pressure on the database cluster and the exchange cluster to try and keep pace with the growth.”

Whitecap knew the Intel® Xeon®-based server hardware powering IXACT Contact* needed a refresh and upgraded to new servers powered by the Intel® Xeon® processor E5-2600v2 product family.

“Every month there are more and more agents on the system,” adds Venneri, noting each one requires zero downtime.

Whitecap* Systems Administration Manager Pratap Mahendran conducted benchmarking tests to determine the best server option focussing on performance and scalability. “We found Intel’s performance was higher than the competitor,” he said. “The Intel® Xeon® E5-2667v2 processor performed the best in this kind of environment and would be able to support the future growth.”

“(During the benchmark testing) we looked at CPU performance and memory because Exchange* leverages both. When compared in the lab to the previous environment with Intel® Xeon® 5530 processors, we found it could take a minute to open a mail box. During this 1,000 sample mailbox test in the lab, they opened instantly.”

Keeping Realtors on Task

IXACT Contact provides real estate agents with activity plans designed not only to help execute on tasks but also shows how to execute a business plan that will help them grow with targeted activities and tools. It also allows agents to easily track suppliers like inspectors, insurers, renovators,

stagers and mortgage brokers so they can easily make recommendations to customers.

“IXACT Contact has helped us increase our business by over 100% in the 2 years we’ve been using it,” says Keith Roy from Macdonald Realty Ltd.* “IXACT Contact offers an affordable program for keeping in touch with your clients and contacts in a strategic way.”

In addition to providing marketing tools, IXACT Contact has built-in reminder services to help real estate agents stay on top of important tasks.

“We base all our tools on the ‘set it and forget it’ idea. Set it once and the system does a whole bunch of things that add value,” says Kay, adding “our drip email plans can last five years providing a stream of regular emails to keep in contact with dormant clients so when they are thinking of selling, they call you and not someone else.”

“Once a plan is in place, the system essentially takes over,” adds Venneri. “It also allows agents to track major customer events like birthdays and anniversaries, and has features to keep agents organized.”

And it’s working for agents who are seeing tangible results. “I closed my first deal before Christmas, and two more are pending! I couldn’t have done this without my IXACT (Contact) keeping me on track and in control,” says Ottawa-based real estate agent Wayne Fraser.

Prudential Homesale Services Group*’s Jim Martin says he “had my best month ever... closed almost \$1.4 million,” and Dennis Paradis from RE/MAX* Hallmark credits IXACT Contact with helping “me double my business this year.”

Marketing in the Cloud

From day one the vision was to offer the service as a cloud-based system for residential real estate agents. IXACT Contact knew it needed to be robust and scalable so it could easily handle real estate agents with 10 or 10,000 contacts, and could manage anywhere

Challenge

Focused on selling homes and getting new listings, real estate agents don’t have time to learn complicated customer relationship management (CRM) software but want tools that will let them keep in touch from their PCs and smart phones with clients and potential clients over long periods of time.

Solution

Connecting with the cloud. IXACT Contact Solutions Inc.* turned to Whitecap Canada* to roll out a real estate specific, cloud-based CRM solution that is easy to use but has sophisticated marketing tools to help new and veteran agents to build their business. Offering the solution in the cloud on a solid Intel® foundation makes it simple to maintain, support, expand and deploy.

Impact

- Growing more than 85% in the past five years, IXACT Contact refreshed its network hardware to new servers powered by the Intel® Xeon® processor E5-2667v2 to support the expanding customer base and provide for scalable growth.
- The upgraded server infrastructure allows users to access their data up to 50% faster, and cuts page load times by about 25%.
- With pre-packaged marketing programs and automated processes, reminders and tools, many real estate agents see an immediate boost to their bottom line including one agent whose says using IXACT Contact helped grow his business 100% in 2 years.

from 10 users to 60,000 users at one time. Delivering the solution in the cloud makes it easier to update software, provide support and ensure all content is backed up. With its growth plans, IXACT Contact* also knew that providing support for individual systems would become a nightmare if they looked at an installed software model.

“We wanted to support any realtor, whether a small independent agent or a broker with large database,” notes Gaasenbeek, with Kay adding that some users could have databases approaching 50K contacts so “we needed scalability with regards to the total users, but there also had to be scalability with regards to the size of the database the individual uses.”

“I couldn’t imagine trying to manage this any other way than as a cloud based solution,” adds Kay. “The software is about three-fold larger or four fold larger on a functionality basis from when we launched it.”

IXACT Contact is projecting the addition of another 5,000 users per year, with Gaasenbeek noting that growth is accelerating with the number of paid users growing 85% versus last year. And a major new initiative underway is the mobile version to optimise the solution for smart phones and tablets, social media for lead generation and web site development.

“The way our system was built, we have the ability to add new functionality on a never ending basis in a way that allows the software to bend without ever becoming unusable,” says Gaasenbeek. “We believed if we architected IXACT Contact the right way, with a focus from day one on an elegant user interface, simplicity, and ease of use, that we could add new functionality without compromising the user experience. We’ve added an incredible amount of new functionality and our architecture has stood up to the test. It has delivered exactly what we were looking for in terms of extensibility and with the infrastructure upgrade, we are ready to effectively handle our very aggressive expansion plans into the next five years.”

“As we continue to add more and more features, we have to maintain high levels of performance to ensure a quality experience,” adds Gaasenbeek.

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About IXACT Contact Solutions Inc.

Headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, IXACT Contact was launched in 2009 to provide real estate agents with the most complete and easy-to-use real estate CRM software in the industry. IXACT Contact’s web-based CRM helps real estate agents stay organized and build lasting relationships with past clients, hot prospects and important referral sources in way that is personalized, relevant and timely.

www.ixactcontact.com



About Whitecap Canada Inc.

Established in 1997, Whitecap is a Microsoft* GOLD Application Development Partner who develops custom software solutions and web portals to assist companies to serve their customers, employees and suppliers better and more efficiently. Whitecap is a privately held, mid-sized company based in Toronto, Whitecap is recognized as a leading custom software development company.

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