



eOn's eQueue Strengthens Lillian Vernon's Commitment to Superior Customer Service

Company Overview

Headquartered in Rye, New York, Lillian Vernon Corporation is a leading national catalog and online retailer that markets gift, houseware, gardening, seasonal and children's products in eight catalog titles. The company introduces more than 2,500 new products a year, purchased directly from hundreds of companies in America and around the world.

Lillian Vernon founded the company in 1951, and she serves as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. She began her mail order business on her kitchen table in a small Mount Vernon, New York apartment. Lillian offered a unique service—free personalization with her customers' initials—and her business was launched.

LILLIAN VERNON

The company also operates a seasonal contact center in Las Vegas, Nevada. Lillian Vernon's National Distribution Center is situated on 61 acres in Virginia Beach, Virginia, which is also the site of the main contact center. The warehouse annex, located nearby, serves as another seasonal contact center during peak months. The distribution center, together with the warehouse annex, totals one million square feet—the size of 21 football fields.

In fiscal year 2002, the company shipped more than 5.2 million packages and had revenues of \$259.6 million. Like most retailers, September, October, November and December are the peak selling months. The last four months of the year are the company's busiest season, with sales accounting for 70 percent of the company's revenue. At the height of the holiday season, the company receives more than 271,000 orders during its peak week.

To handle this demand while maintaining the highest quality customer service, Lillian Vernon needed advanced technology that was scalable, rich in features, reliable and expandable for the future. A committee representing every major department—from a contact center supervisor to the CIO—comparison-shopped and selected eOn Communications.

Customer Story



Lillian Vernon,
Founder and
Chief Executive Officer

eOn Customer Success Story:

Lillian Vernon Corporation



Main Contact Center located in Virginia Beach, Virginia

The Problem: Implementing New, Sophisticated Technology That Reduces Costs While Incorporating E-Commerce Functionality

In the competitive retail marketplace, Lillian Vernon faces two key challenges. One is seasonal demand, and the other is hiring and retaining sufficient, qualified contact center agents.

Lillian Vernon's contact center agents handle call volumes ranging from 45,000 per week in the spring up to 300,000 per week in December. During the peak season, which starts in September and runs through December, the center expands from hundreds of agents to over 1,800 agents. The seasonality of the business is a challenge that the company's operational and technical departments must support.

A third challenge is online shopping. Today, 80 percent of Lillian Vernon's business is done over the telephone, with the remaining 20 percent using mail, fax or e-mail inquiry. However, increasing numbers of customers are turning to the Web. To ensure agent productivity and build upon the success of its operations, while meeting its customers' evolving needs, Lillian Vernon required a reliable contact center solution that could handle phone calls today and easily expand to include the rapidly increasing volume of e-mail and Web chat requests.

With the right technology in place, the contact center can answer each customer's request quickly and accurately, with lower training costs. Agents are trained across multiple points of contact—phone, fax, e-mail and Web chat. Thus, Lillian Vernon can better utilize all agents because their different skills can be put to work.

The Solution: eQueue Multi-Media Contact Center Solution

Faced with seasonal shifts, increasing online shopping and a company mission of delivering superior customer service, Lillian Vernon turned to eOn for its eQueue® Multi-Media Contact Center Solution. eOn's eQueue enables the company to connect three contact center locations cost-effectively, route customer requests to the best suited agents and transition to an e-commerce business model.

"Lillian Vernon's mission is to remain the number one retailer of personalized gifts, and the eOn eQueue solution enables our contact center agents to treat every customer as a VIP," said Ellis Admire, Director of MIS Operations at Lillian Vernon. "To support our mission, every piece of equipment must be available for every agent, while providing the highest quality customer service—the cornerstone of our business."

With this emphasis on high quality customer service and satisfaction, Lillian Vernon found eQueue's Recording capabilities extremely useful because it allows supervisors to monitor agents' conversations with customers so they can provide valuable feedback on performance. With the ease of scheduled recording capabilities, supervisors can monitor agents when they need to be monitored, and listen to the recordings at their convenience. Lillian Vernon can also record special offers, capturing customers' interactions each time a specific product is offered, which is a crucial mechanism of gathering customer input.

"Because eQueue Recording is an integrated application and part of a unified solution, the recordings are very easy to access," said Jim Turner, Director of Customer Communications at Lillian Vernon. "With the ability to record special offers, Lillian Vernon has been able to expand its business by having the data available to identify the techniques that turn inquiries into sales."

LILLIAN VERNON

The eOn solution not only provides an opportunity to grow and enhance multi-media support, it also provides the robust features and functionality needed for improved contact center operations.

"Skills-based routing is essential to effectively deliver customer interactions," said Turner. "Unlike other offerings, eQueue's unified platform provides true skills-based routing capabilities to build agent skill sets accordingly so individual agents' capabilities are maximized. This ensures our customers are connected to the most skilled agent to meet their needs as quickly as possible—especially as our online business grows."

After a major re-launch of its Web site in 2001, Lillian Vernon required their new contact center technology to be able to manage customer e-mail as effectively as a phone call. A group of Lillian Vernon agents are currently using eQueue Email, with an ever-increasing number of Web interactions projected for the future.

"Since Lillian Vernon is incorporating more online functions into its contact center, we needed a flexible, unified platform that would also interface easily with other products," said Admire. "Because the eQueue is built on an open platform, the solution will integrate seamlessly with workforce management and CRM functionality."

The Bottom Line

Using the eQueue technology, Lillian Vernon condensed the need for six T1 lines down to two lines by using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) network routing during its most recent peak season. As a result, the company saved approximately \$100,000 during its first peak season.

The company also experienced additional cost savings in its power and equipment requirements. The eQueue has high-density components, which result in a system that is smaller in size, requiring less power than their previous technology. Lillian Vernon's agents use programmable soft keys on their digital phones to move from one location to another within the contact center—their key assignments move with them on the phone, which lowers training costs.

"eOn's eQueue is our foundation—the ACD is the most important component of the contact center, and the additional functionality of Recording, Web and CRM can then be added," said Turner. "The eQueue enables us to utilize additional capabilities easily when we need them."

In the future, Lillian Vernon recognizes that CRM will become even more critical to their business, and plans are underway to implement enhanced CRM applications. In addition to supporting e-mail, Lillian Vernon will expand functionality to include Web chat and unified routing for voice, fax and e-mail communications.

"We chose the eQueue because we wanted the most technologically advanced solution on the market, and we also wanted to make an investment that years from now would still give us a sophisticated solution that supports our future growth and the evolving needs of our customers," said Admire. "We chose eOn because of their commitment to providing state-of-the-art technology and service, as evidenced by their strong users group and responsiveness to their customers."

eOn has developed a customized reporting application for Lillian Vernon that displays agent alerts. eOn is also building a series of custom reports that will incorporate data from other Lillian Vernon databases.

"Our vendors are our partners," said Lillian Vernon, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. "Having a mission of delivering the best service to our customers, we select leading vendors who will help us meet our current and future technology needs. eOn Communications has proven their commitment to us in service, technology and cost savings."

The Lillian Vernon Contact Center Solution

eOn eQueue Multi-Media Contact Center Solution

- **Unified Routing for Customer Interaction Management:** Single queue for all media types – voice, e-mail and Web communications – improves customer service and loyalty, increases agent productivity, and lowers total cost of ownership.
- **Comprehensive Applications including E-mail and Web Chat:** Applications include e-mail and Web chat with comprehensive universal knowledge database, integrated voice response, voice mail with unified messaging, fax messaging, quality assurance recording, complete telephony capability and a complete range of desktop devices and applications.
- **Proven and Reliable Platform:** Bridging the gap from traditional call centers to new Web-enabled contact centers by applying years of experience in designing robust solutions for the demanding requirements of multi-media contact centers.
- **Scalable and Modular:** For contact centers with as few as ten agents to those with thousands, the flexibility to add, combine and customize important features and functions to meet the individual needs of the contact center today and well into the future.
- **Open Solution:** Completely open architecture based on the Linux™ platform ensures contact centers have more choices with consistent and personalized service delivery, consolidated tracking and reporting of all customer contacts, as well as compatibility with third party systems to integrate other applications.
- **Networking and VoIP:** Open architecture platform allows traditional voice and Internet Protocol (IP) services to coexist using standards-based gateway and control functionality, providing the foundation for building converged voice, data and Web-centric contact center solutions on IP and circuit-switched networks; enables contact centers to implement Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) gateway functionality and unified messaging applications, as well as realize benefits such as the routing, managing and reporting of multi-media interactions over data networks, multi-site networking and support for remote agents.

To learn more about Lillian Vernon, visit www.lillianvernon.com or call 1-800-LILLIAN.



National Distribution Center
located in Virginia Beach, Virginia



www.eoncommunications.com

Features and specifications subject to change without notice
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