

A Cut Above The Competition



'Gillette considers that the twin input of IBM and Panacea is an extension of our own in-house IT activity. Each member of this team plays an equally important role, and to be effective we all have to know two things – first, what Gillette needs in terms of exploiting a competitive market, and second, what IT developments are in the pipeline to achieve these goals. Panacea knows both our business, and its own...'

Gillette may be most famous for its close shaves, but the company takes no risks with its marketing strategy. It uses best of breed products like AS/400 in conjunction with RS/6000 and Oracle to deliver more effective management information. To achieve improved sales and marketing knowledge, and to better plan advertising and promotional campaigns, Gillette commissioned Panacea to review its IBM RS/6000-based IT system, which features an Oracle database.

Gillette

Gillette is the leading supplier of shaving and toiletry products in the world but faces intense competition.

Gillette's style of operation allows its business units to effectively control company direction and requires the corporate IT function to deliver a service which underpins the company's defined business goals.

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This was the objective that IBM entrusted to its award-winning business partner, Panacea, confident that the company would work well with the Gillette in-house IT team.

The Project

Gillette's Technical Services Manager, Duncan Wallace, explains that the company is in the midst of a two-year project to replace an old AS/400-based system, with an RS/6000-based client server application, incorporating an Oracle database.

The IT team within Gillette serves three groups in the UK: Client Services, Technical Centre and Day Centre Operation. This UK structure must be linked to core sites in Boston, Kronberg, and Isleworth. In addition, some 60 international Gillette sites must be linked. The team also provides network management, the distribution of sales and marketing data to the sales groups spread throughout Europe (which need daily data updates), and the financial application.

Within the IT function, Panacea has been working on new projects where RS/6000 based decision support systems have been used to maximise data extracted from the existing AS/400. The main objective of this move is to allow for more efficient access to remote data.

One of Panacea's main strengths is its ability to fully understand all of the implications of an RS/6000-based

system and to harness the expertise of software partners. Panacea's principal software partners for the RS/6000 are Oracle, Lotus and Tetra. The Oracle and Lotus products provide Enterprise Solutions aimed at multi-nationals. The Tetra software is an industry leading commercial solution for medium sized companies. The IBM RS/6000 is a scalable range of Open Systems products that is typically used in environments where many operators have simultaneous access to several business critical software solutions.

Teamwork

IBM's Liz Cannon states: "IBM trusts Panacea to deliver IBM's high standards – so much so, that we awarded Panacea with our RS/6000 Business Associate of the Year, 1996 award. The award recognises Panacea's outstanding quality of support and sales of IBM's RISC System 6000 product. Gillette is an important client which deserves the attention to detail given as a matter of course by Panacea."

"Panacea takes control of the groundwork," says Panacea's Colin Skelton. "We ensure that through regular, at least once weekly meetings with both IBM and Gillette, that we respond quickly to its needs."



"Because Panacea understands our business and the continual changes in this field, it is well placed to be proactive both in terms of hardware consultancy and network management," comments Duncan Wallace.

"With a budget in excess of £1million last year alone – expected to increase next year as the system is expanded – it is important to us that we get the right advice. Weekly meetings with Colin Skelton plus support from network management expert Paul Siddals, keep us informed of potential and actual developments and allow Panacea to assess our needs to match these.

"It would not be going too far to say Panacea has a collection of uniquely talented people, and IBM is right to entrust them with the management of our account."



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