



Leading Cooperative Bank Nagpur, India implemented SMS banking and tele-banking technology to provide variety of banking services 24X7.

Developing and using technology for its own sake has long been a temptation for many in the IT industry. However, the chance to use existing technology in a new way can be just as exciting. ADCC IT team was developing solution for fleet location in early 2001, ADCC was using a German made hardware for location tracking (GPS/GSM) ,it was working on two way protocol and SMS was used for exchange of data between the hardware and the control station software at that time Mr. Arun Lakhani (CMD ADCC) tapped the potential in SMS based other value added services and the idea was conceived and it gave birth to IRBS (Integrated remote banking solution).

Mr. Sanjay Deshmukh (Director, ADCC) says "if we can add value to existing banking service by implementing IRBS then project had wide support within the bank."

ADCC Development team says development of the SMS-based and IVR based IRBS (Integrated remote banking solution) was a "challenging and fun thing to do", and the time was right for such a project.

The Idea of IRBS was shared and discussed with Mr. Chaudhary(CEO, Cooperative Bank), he was excited with the idea of providing banking services of 24X7.

IRBS is a value added service to bank customers. It enables bank to automate its routine working. The bank can interact with its customer through this system. Customers need not come to the bank for their routine inquiries; rather they can access this information directly through the IRBS. This reduces the bank's traffic thereby increasing working efficiency. On the other hand, customers get the convenience of accessing the bank directly from their home or workplace. IRBS adds real value by its event based alerts. Customer is informed about all the transactions happening in his account. It can include range of services like information about bank accounts, Time deposits, ATM card transactions, Credit card transactions, Fund transfer, Personal loan details, Mutual Funds etc.

Services

IRBS system has two modules wireless banking (SMS Banking) and tele-banking (Interactive voice response). This system has PUSH-PULL and alert features using delivery channels like Telephone/SMS/FAX/email.

The client of bank has to register with the service and have to opt for the information using the required channel.

Phone banking was in existence since long time but this service was mostly provided by big players in this arena at the same they were charging high premium for this type of service. "Providing premium service on lowers rates" is our prime thirst says –Mr. Chaudhary (CEO, Cooperative Bank).

"IRBS has wide chances to lead this segment due to features offered" says Satyajee Raut (Group Head Products)

Designing IRBS

Mr. Arun Lakhani (CMD , ADCC) calls the IRBS project "classic technology example of vender and client partnership"

"Designing IRBS was great challenge as we were expected to transform an Idea to reality" says Sandeep Thakre (Lead Consultant).

No Major difficulties were encountered, but team spends some time working on development of SMS Server and IVR server. Some of the time the hardware or protocol setting was needed. Main aim was to reduce the troubleshooting time in case the system goes live.

"Testing was really a fun" say Sachin Bang (QA-Lead consultant). Almost all the employees of ADCC had received hundreds of SMS and telephone call when mass testing was going on. Everybody contributed more than hundred percent in the development.



"Some of the people who worked at ADCC had some business capability in the areas we were working on and had some ideas, particularly on streamlining processes," explains Mr. Sanjay Deshmukh. "It was after ADCC came to us with its wireless application ideas - and we saw some great ideas - that we worked together to build IRBS." Mr. Chaudhary(CEO, Cooperative Bank). Development work started on IRBS in MID 2001 and it was made live in early 2002.

Overnight updates

Earlier alerts were not part of the system, during the development and discussion with domain experts, it was decided to go with alerts for some important services and this decision paid off as most of the customer subscribed alert based service.

End user testing

IRBS was deployed for sample testing in January 2002. The system was then tested by some pool of customers. After successful testing it was launched in March 2002. This service was offered for free as an introductory offer and received good response.

One of the customer "Earlier I used to keep track of balance in my mind and it was difficult to keep , but now it is more easy , I just type Bal keyword on my mobile set and I get the response SMS in less than a minute"

Lessons learned

Initially when service was started ADCC and bank was expecting lots of PULL messages from the user, but this proved wrong. They were more than happy if pushing was done from banking end for balance or some other service but on their own only few of them use to pull the banking service. So in the latter version most of the services were schedule based PUSH services, for example everybody who had subscribed the service were receiving Balance on their mobile set in the morning or were receiving transaction based SMS.

Unexpected problems

On cricket match day there was lots and lots of traffic when India won cricket match against Pakistan. Because of this huge traffic with the operator customer did not received the SMS on the time.

Continuing benefits

Mr. Arun Lakhani points out that, from a business management viewpoint, innovations like IRBS, have high value in maintaining client relationships.

The team firmly believes they have created a good base and can continue to build on that as technology improves.