

## RIGHTNOW HELPS SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN LEADERSHIP IN RAPIDLY EVOLVING MMO GAMING MARKET

Sony Online Entertainment (SOE)—a recognized worldwide leader in massively multiplayer online (MMO) games—is seeing their investment in MMO gaming paying off as they experience enormous success with titles like EverQuest® and Star Wars Galaxies®. But the MMO market is still young. Games are being updated as often as every six weeks—putting new pressures on SOE’s support team. Customers are also paying for games on a subscription basis, rather than a one-time purchase. So it’s more important than ever to keep them engaged and satisfied.

Plus, as with all kinds of electronic gaming, responsive support is critical to the customer experience. After all, if you’re engrossed in a life-and-death battle with a dragon, you definitely don’t want to wait very long to find out your fiery avenger isn’t working.

SOE also needs to capture as much insight as possible into this new market, so it can continue to improve its games, its underlying technology, and its customer care processes. At the same time, the company has to control costs so it can keep the price of a monthly subscription low enough to maximize consumer acceptance—while still making a profit.

RightNow is helping SOE on all counts. By providing an intelligent, unified system for quickly giving customers the answers they need across all communication channels, RightNow ensures SOE’s ability to deliver the kind of premium experience customers expect from a company with a world-class brand. By maximizing both the effectiveness of its self-service resources and the productivity of its contact center staff, RightNow is also keeping SOE’s costs low. And with its sophisticated analytics, RightNow is providing SOE with the insight it needs to keep one step ahead of the competition as the MMO market moves from niche to mainstream.

“The MMO market by its very nature requires us to have a much more highly engaged relationship with our customers than exists with the typical console game customer,” says SOE vice president of customer service and quality assurance George Scotto. “RightNow enables us to cost-efficiently fulfill the requirements of that engagement and deliver the premium-quality customer experience that differentiates our brand.”

### **A Highly Effective Multi-Channel Customer Care Environment**

When SOE first entered the MMO market in 1999, it started with only the most rudimentary contact center tools—including its home-grown in-game chat system. As its customer base grew, the company added trouble-ticketing software, an email management application, and other applications. This fragmented environment made it difficult to deliver a consistently excellent customer experience and undermined the efficiency of SOE’s contact center. It also limited the company’s visibility into service issues and trends.

However, with the success of EverQuest® II and a paying customer base that was continuing to grow, SOE had to make a change. After evaluating Siebel, Talisma, Kana, and other vendors—and seeing what other companies in the MMO space were doing—SOE decided to go with RightNow.

“RightNow offered us the ability to streamline customer care processes across all of our communication channels.”

**Industry:** Entertainment/Media

### **Goals**

- Provide optimized customer experience to support brand and market leadership
- Minimize total contact center costs
- Develop greater insight into new, rapidly evolving massively multiplayer online gaming paradigm

### **Achievements**

- Enhanced customer experience across all communication channels
- Substantial reductions in chat and email volume
- Phone calls reduced to 2% of total support workload
- Contact center analytics help optimize allocation of development dollars

# CASE STUDY: SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT



RightNow's dynamic approach to knowledge management was particularly appealing to SOE because of the pace of change in its market. RightNow's strength in email management was also important, since online customers are much more likely to type out a help request online than they are to pick up the phone. RightNow was also the only solution that enabled SOE to effectively manage web, email, chat, and phone support from a single, unified system.

"RightNow offered us the ability to streamline customer care processes across all of our communication channels," recalls Scotto. "Just as important, it allowed us to deploy its diverse capabilities incrementally—so that we could prioritize our needs and systematically build from there."

The availability of a well-managed, easy-to-search RightNow knowledge base had a significant impact on SOE's support operation. Email and chat volume both decreased substantially. This reduced the company's operating costs and allowed its staff to respond to remaining contact volume more quickly and with greater personal attention—resulting in the premium customer experience that customers expect from the SOE brand.

## Tight Integration with Internally Developed In-Game Support Software

SOE integrated RightNow with its custom in-game support tools, so that those requests could also be managed from a common system. Using pass-through authentication, customers are identified in RightNow based on their game login. The system also automatically pre-populates numerous fields in the RightNow trouble-ticket using data captured from the customer's gaming session, including their character's various attributes and location. The data can then be used to automatically route the incident to the agent with the appropriate skills. This combination of pre-populated tickets and skills-based routing enables SOE's technical staff to more quickly diagnose and respond to the problem. It also eliminates the need to ask the customer a lot of questions.

In fact, SOE is now able to respond to in-game help requests in just one or two hours. And the information customers get is always consistent, clear and accurate regardless of how they contact the company.

"RightNow is a great tool for delivering knowledge at the point of action—whether a customer is looking for information about a game or an agent is looking for information about a

customer," says Scotto. "So we've been able to continuously improve both the quality of our customer experience and the cost-efficiency with which we deliver that experience."

## Driving Smarter Development Decisions with Better Customer Insight

In addition to enabling SOE to continuously improve service, RightNow has also contributed to a better overall customer experience by helping to drive smarter, more market-driven development decisions. Using RightNow's reporting tools, SOE's support team can quickly ascertain the current top support issues.

"As a customer service manager, it's great to be able to present development with the hard numbers they need to make the best possible business decision," explains Scotto. "Our customers and our company both win when we are acting on real information, instead of just anecdotal feedback."

SOE continues to expand its RightNow implementation to support its expanding customer base. The company has added interfaces in French, German, and Japanese and has plans to add more languages in the near future. SOE's support team also continues to expand and refine its RightNow knowledge base, which presently includes about 6,000 answers.

Scotto notes that RightNow has been an extremely helpful and proactive technology partner for SOE over the years. "RightNow is always coming up with new ideas for how we can use their software to better serve our customers, reduce costs, or gain deeper market insight," he says. "I don't think I've ever worked with a vendor who has shown so much concern for our success on an ongoing basis."

## ABOUT SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

Sony Online Entertainment (SOE) is a recognized worldwide leader in massively multiplayer online (MMO) games with titles such as EverQuest® and Star Wars; Galaxies®. SOE uses RightNow CX to effectively manage web, email, chat, and phone support from a single, unified customer experience platform to deliver the premium service expected from a world-class brand. RightNow also provides SOE with a complete global view of customer activities. With interfaces in French, German, and Japanese, SOE delivers consistent and relevant knowledge to customers, regardless of location or time zone.