

# Cloudmark boosts customer satisfaction and staff productivity with IBM content management software.

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## Overview

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### ■ Challenge

*Reduce support center workload and costs while improving customer service*

### ■ Why IBM?

*IBM technology combined a real-time understanding of user intent and application context to optimize the relevancy of information delivered*

### ■ Solution

*Supply accurate, automated answers to customer queries, reducing e-mail flow to support center staff*

### ■ Key Benefits

*100% payback in less than three months; 50% reduction in e-mails received; 15% increase in customer retention; 96% faster solution deployment than with competitors' products; reduced time to deliver answers from up to 3 days to just seconds*



*Cloudmark customers can obtain instant and accurate answers to service-related questions online, cutting in half the number of problems support staff must handle.*

Cloudmark provides comprehensive messaging security solutions for Internet service providers (ISPs), enterprises and end users. The company's intelligent and collaborative approach to fighting spam, phishing, viruses and other malware has made Cloudmark the fastest growing messaging anti-abuse solution worldwide, protecting more than 200 million mailboxes in 163 countries.

*“Our customers ask complex questions requiring specific information. The IBM Classification Module helps them get to the right answers more quickly.”*

*–Kris Politopoulos, Manager,  
Cloudmark Customer Support*

*“Using the IBM Classification Module, we achieve more than 90 percent accuracy in our automated responses. As a result, we have cut the number of tickets we receive in half.”*

*– Kris Politopoulos*

Cloudmark must efficiently manage each customer interaction if it is to keep operational costs low while ensuring that customer satisfaction remains high. However, as the company's business grew and new products were introduced, executives watched the number of e-mail inquiries to its customer support department more than double. Redundant questions and complex issues taxed support personnel, who often stayed late just to keep up.

As a stop-gap measure, Cloudmark implemented a home-grown solution that worked with Microsoft® Outlook® and Microsoft Exchange Server to route and categorize the increasing number of inbound e-mails. However, this system couldn't automate responses for the questions Cloudmark typically received.

### **Poor results with “auto-suggest” products**

To achieve its goals, the company set out to deliver faster responses to customer e-mails and deflect a high percentage of e-mails from coming into its support center. Its strategy was to achieve an e-mail deflection rate—the percentage of e-mails that are answered without agent intervention—of at least 20 percent. Cloudmark's strategy was to find a solution that could be implemented within a month. It was critical that the product could integrate into the existing environment and leverage the company's knowledge base.

Initially, Cloudmark evaluated products designed to help support staff “auto-suggest” answers—or choose from a number of pre-written possible responses—to an e-mail once it was received. However, this approach had several drawbacks. Customers were not provided a timeframe in which they would receive an answer, waiting as long as three days for a response. Agents had to maintain substantial involvement with each e-mail response. And, because the product line evolved over time, automated suggestions tended to be inaccurate and require extensive case-by-case tuning.

To improve response time and expand its business without hiring additional support staff, Cloudmark executives needed to provide customers with accurate answers to their questions without staff having to respond individually to each e-mail.

### IBM technology effectively streamlines communication

After a thorough product evaluation and proof of concept, Cloudmark selected IBM Classification Module for OmniFind Discovery Edition. Unlike competitive products, this solution is built on a foundation of:

- **Contextual understanding**, combining a real-time understanding of user intent and application context to optimize the relevance of information that is delivered.
- **Adaptive presentation** to help guide the discovery process by presenting answers, navigational refinement options and proactive guidance in a format that helps people take action.
- **Business user control** that allows subject matter experts to continually enhance the self-service experience without reliance on IT. Bundled analytics guide tuning workflows that include extending the vocabulary of the system, fine-tuning relevance and crafting more targeted replies.
- **Secure access** to multiple repositories provides native access to dozens of enterprise content repositories that honor the inherent security model to personalize the end user experience.

The implementation team deployed a system prototype in less than one week and brought the entire project into production the following week. Cloudmark was thrilled with the speedy deployment. Company staff estimated that alternative technologies would have taken up to six months to deploy due to the complexity of customer questions.

### Accurate responses improve staff productivity

Now, instead of filling out a request for help that generates a ticket in the system, customers can first search the company's extensive knowledge base to view possible solutions to product problems. "Our customers ask complex questions requiring specific information. The IBM Classification Module helps them get the right answers more quickly," says Kris Politopoulos, manager of Cloudmark Customer Support.

The software's natural language capability provides customers with highly accurate and relevant search results in seconds. For each query a customer inputs, the software provides three relevant answers from the company's collection of self-help articles in its knowledge base. IBM Classification Module software "learns," both from existing query history and from each response, delivering the most relevant knowledge base articles for any given question. Using the software's reporting and analytic capabilities, Cloudmark staff can view which search terms customers use and then, with just a few clicks of the mouse, assign an issue code to connect future searches with the correct knowledge base articles. Because of this, customers rarely have to contact a customer care agent.

### Key Components

#### Software

- IBM Classification Module for OmniFind™ Discovery Edition

*"Without the IBM Classification Module, we would have needed to double the size of our team to handle our growing customer base, which would have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars each year."*

*– Kris Politopoulos*

"Using the IBM Classification Module, we achieve more than 90 percent accuracy in our automated responses," says Politopoulos. "As a result, we have cut the number of tickets we receive in half."

With the ability to provide customers with accurate, automated answers, Cloudmark's e-mail deflection rate went from zero to 35 percent in the first week of implementation, exceeding the company's target of 20 percent. Since then, the deflection rate has surpassed 50 percent. This has enabled its team of support staff to easily handle six additional product areas and a 400 percent increase in business.

"We can effectively support more products without adding support staff," says Politopoulos. "Without the IBM Classification Module, we would have needed to double the size of our team to handle our growing customer base, which would have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars each year."

### **100 percent payback in less than three months**

Cloudmark's investment in IBM Classification Module software paid for itself in less than three months and the company has realized an annualized return on investment greater than 400 percent.

Additionally, staff has had more time to manage strategic projects that enhance customer satisfaction and product quality. For example, customer support staff has more time to write knowledge base articles, which offer solutions for product issues and are accessible to customers through the IBM Classification Module. In one

year, the number of articles increased from just a handful to several hundred.

The Cloudmark customer support team has also created test environments to help the company anticipate and proactively resolve issues before new products are introduced. "We've significantly expanded our team's responsibility to help improve product quality," says Politopoulos. "Previously, when new products were introduced, we saw a tremendous spike in the number of queries received. Now, we have less than a five percent increase."

As customer satisfaction has increased, Cloudmark staff estimates that customer retention has increased by 15 percent. "We are seeing less customer churn because of our ability to quickly solve our customers' problems," says Politopoulos.

### **For more information**

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Somers, NY 10589  
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