

Oracle Quality Online: Enabling the Service Loop

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Oracle Quality Online: Enabling the Service Loop

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Oracle Quality Online is a comprehensive quality-management application that allows organizations to track and manage product defects, enhancements, and associated service requests across multiple business units.

By bringing disparate groups such as marketing, service, and engineering into the same service loop, businesses can incorporate customer feedback into each stage of the product life cycle. This improves the final product, as well as customer service. Resulting knowledge can be captured in the organizational knowledge base and made accessible to customers through Oracle iSupport.

By using Oracle Quality Online in combination with other products in the Oracle E-Business Suite, organizations can ensure faster release cycles, better products, and improved service, at a lower cost.

AN INTEGRATED SOLUTION

Large organizations often segment customer service, product engineering, and marketing. This can improve response times and lower costs by allowing engineering to focus on customer maintenance and marketing to focus on new releases, but it can also fragment information and business processes that when unified provide the best products and services.

Customer-service agents can reduce service times if they can leverage marketing and engineering information easily. Reducing the time it takes for a customer issue to be resolved results in increased customer satisfaction and higher customer retention rates.

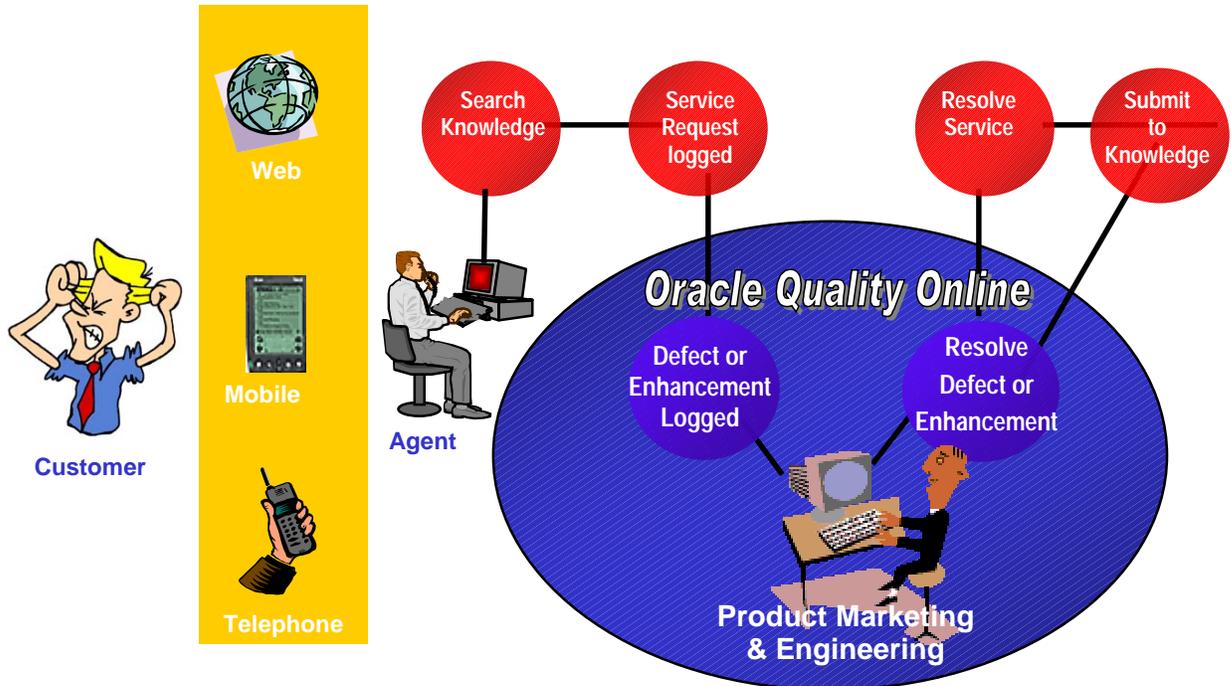
By understanding what customers want, better products can be designed and built, which improves sales. Marketing and engineering need to leverage information captured by customer service to achieve this.

While marketing, engineering, and service must focus on their separate deliverables, they need to unify key business flows to resolve known product problems and build new products.

Research from the Harvard Business Review indicates that it is six to ten times cheaper to keep a current customer than to add a new one.

Source: Zero Defections:
Quality Comes to Services:

Completing the Service Loop



According to Reichheld & Sasser's 1990 Harvard Business Review, companies can increase profits by up to 100% if 5% more of their customers were retained.

The diagram above shows how Oracle Quality Online can improve service times through an integrated service flow.

A customer searches the organizational knowledge base through a customer-service agent or using Oracle iSupport. If a solution is not found, a service request is logged and assigned to a service agent, who may then perform an additional search against all defects and service requests, a larger pool of information.

If a defect is found, the service request can be linked to that defect and await its resolution. If no defect is found, the service request can be entered as a new defect.

Crucial information is passed from the service request to the defect, and they are automatically linked. At the same time the defect is automatically assigned to engineering.

Once the customer-service issue is resolved, the customer can be notified. The resulting knowledge is entered into the knowledge base and published through Oracle iSupport to avoid future requests. A similar flow might be followed for product-enhancement requests assigned to marketing, which would allow customer feedback to be leveraged to provide improved product functionality.

By automating the flow of information from customer service to product management and by providing automatic resolution notifications, Oracle Quality Online can decrease customer-service times.

Through close integration, customer-service agents are better able to track service issues that await either engineering or marketing action, and product management has knowledge of the number of customers affected by defects or enhancement requests.

Improving Products

Marketing typically determines product direction, while engineering focuses on building new products. To meet these marketing and engineering requirements, Oracle Quality Online separates defects from enhancement requests, yet the two are closely related, because ultimately engineering must deliver the proposed changes.

Enhancement requests are suggestions for new product functionality, which must be carefully reviewed and prioritized. Those that are approved by marketing become new product requirements and are scheduled for development by engineering. In testing, the new functionality may fail to meet the requirements, which may result in a defect being logged as a child of the enhancement. A change request may be logged as an enhancement, but ultimately closed as a defect. Likewise, defects may be closed as enhancements.

Information Capture

Complete and accurately logged defects and enhancement requests facilitate communication between customer service and other groups. Untrained and overworked service agents cannot capture the level of information needed by engineering. This can result in customer issues bouncing between departments in an attempt to gather the correct information. To be able to push meaningful solutions into the knowledge base, problems must be described consistently and in full.

In Oracle Quality Online, defects or enhancements can be automatically created from a service request. This ensures that key information is not lost and that the service request is always linked to the resulting defect. Also, an administrator may set up a series of questions that a service agent must answer to describe the defect or enhancement. These prompts can vary based on the product and type of defect or enhancement. The resulting information is automatically formatted for the knowledge base.

Another common area of absent or incorrect data is the workgroup-specific information that engineers must enter each time they create a defect or enhancement. To ensure that consistent and accurate information can be entered quickly and efficiently, Oracle Quality Online provides users with personalized quick-create functionality to automatically populate the create screen. With a few simple clicks, common fields are automatically filled in, permitting the user to focus more on a meaningful problem description.

Duplicate defect records are confusing. By grouping like information, duplication and redundancy can be avoided. Duplicate defects should be linked to the parent in

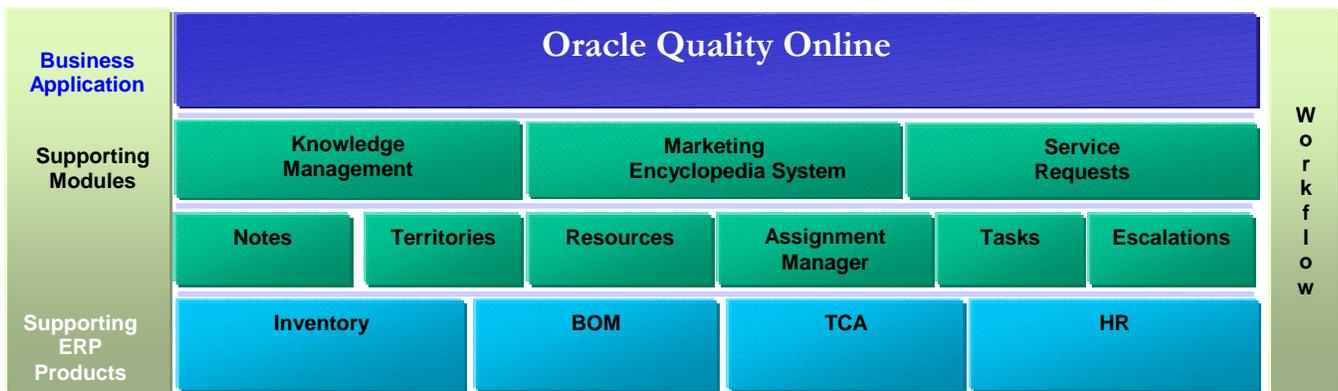
According to the Standish Group's Chaos Report, published in 1995, 53% of software projects ultimately cost 189% or more of their original budgets. Software projects that do get completed typically retain only about 42% of the features that were originally proposed.

a hierarchical manner and closed. A defect awaiting the resolution of another defect can also be linked in a hierarchical relationship to indicate the dependency. Lastly, enhancements that are requirements can be split into subrequirements in a hierarchical manner.

Oracle Quality Online ensures that the right information is captured to resolve all defects and to avoid further defects through solid knowledge management.

Shared Modules

At the core of Oracle Quality Online lies a common product structure, defined through Oracle Inventory and Oracle Bills of Material (BOM), and a common customer model defined in the Trading Community Architecture (TCA). This information may be entered once and shared across CRM and ERP applications. A common product structure and a common customer allow integration between service applications, and enables meaningful reports across all applications.



Tasks is a common module in the E-Business Suite. Tasks can be created in connection with a defect or enhancement, but have an independent life cycle. Because Tasks is shared across applications, tasks may be created and assigned to individuals in different departments. By encouraging users to communicate and assign actions through tasks, the input required to deal with a defect can be obtained from different departments without having to bounce the responsibility for the defect from one department to the next. The primary responsibility remains where it belongs, while the required information is collected in an orderly fashion, making it more useful and easier to add to the knowledge base.

The Escalations module is shared between Quality Online and TeleService. Dissatisfied customers can escalate defects themselves, alerting the service organization of their expectations. An escalation can be initiated automatically as well, for example, if a defect is exceeding the specified resolution time. The time can be set automatically based on the severity of the defect, and can also be altered by the appropriate individual.

The Assignment Manager is used by several modules and leverages territory information. When a defect or enhancement is created, it is automatically assigned to the correct individual or group based on any number of assignment rules. As the

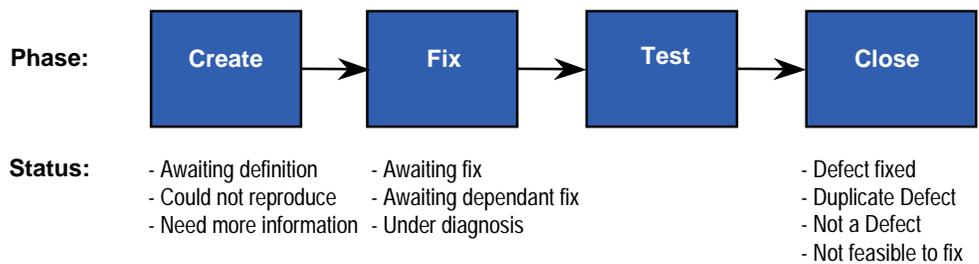
defect or enhancement moves through the business process, it can be automatically reassigned to relevant groups and organizations.

Workflow sits across all modules, allowing organizations to customize the flow to suit their business.

Automating Processes

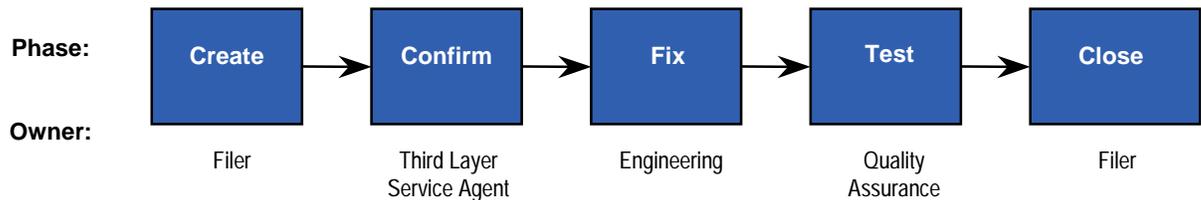
Oracle Quality Online enables the engineering and marketing processes to be tailored to the needs of a specific organization. A process can be defined, monitored, and continually refined through a configurable workflow and automated assignment.

The high-level business process is defined by a series of phases. The following is an example business process for defects.



Multiple business processes may be set up and mapped to defect types, so that, for example, when a generic defect becomes a specific type like an enhancement request or a documentation defect, the appropriate set of phases automatically display on the user interface.

The business process can be easily refined. In the example above, engineering must interface with all levels of service personnel. By including a confirmation phase that is automatically assigned to an experienced service agent, resolution times might be reduced.



Workflow can further customize and automate the business process.

By automating key business processes, Oracle Quality Online improves the efficiency of both engineering and marketing. This can result in decreased time to market as well as improved functionality and quality.

SUMMARY

Marketing, engineering, and customer service are disparate divisions that must work together as a unified team to achieve their common goals of providing sound products and great service as quickly as possible. The risks of not unifying these divisions are lost sales and customers.

Oracle Quality Online is part of an integrated service flow that improves service efficiency and avoids customer issues, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and retention.

Oracle Quality Online also automates the product life cycle, resulting in high-quality products with the right functionality, brought to market faster.

By integrating with the service suite and leveraging common ERP setups, Oracle Quality Online ensures consistency across the entire organization.



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