

2bMore offers insight in customer information with an online service model for business intelligence

Large organisations possess increasing quantities of customer information. Analysing information in such 'big data' environments is a job for specialists. The Dutch marketing services organisation 2bMore offers a unique combination of expertise and software to its clients. In this Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) offer, a reliable infrastructure is of vital importance. That is why Combell provides an efficient, highly secure platform with 24/7 support.



Marketing data are a rapidly growing segment for many organisations. CRM, ERP and other transaction systems today offer loads of information on the buying behaviour of a customer. To that is added the online behaviour on all sorts of information pages or vendor sites. Which customers are the most profitable? Which prospects are ready to buy? 2bMore provides answers to such questions by means of a thorough analysis of data from various digital sources.

Data warehouse brings together marketing information

Convert loads of data to understandable informa-

tion and insights: that's the goal of business intelligence. In the marketing sector, this approach is growing rapidly. Nevertheless, the complexity of this shouldn't be underestimated, because insight grows as organisations link together increasing numbers of data sources. In large organisations with thousands of contacts, transactions and online interactions each day, this really is a matter of 'big data'.

2bMore helps organisations gather their customer information and analyse it, directly from their ICT systems and websites. "In our marketing database, we eliminate duplicate records and standardise customer information, which creates a global customer image", explains 2bMore's manager Eelco Gerritsma. "Most organisations have a good grip on things like contact information, age and gender, or even transaction information like orders and invoicing. Where many companies are experiencing trouble, however, is

2bMore's ISSUE

- Collect, standardise and analyse customer data for large organisations
- Tailor-made work with a foreseeable price tag
- Work with confidential information
- Guaranteed data protection
- Focus on the needs of the customer

Combells SOLUTION

- Software-as-a-Service
- Microsoft SQL Server, Active Directory, SharePoint, Data Protection Manager
- Virtualisation (VMware)
- Dedicated hosting
- NetApp SAN storage network
- Offsite backup
- Procedures for customised system management

COMBELL'S ASSETS according to 2bMore

- Custom work with a short time-to-market and a foreseeable price tag
- Superior protection of customer data for dozens of large organisations
- Rock-solid warranties on the level of privacy
- 24/7 availability for web analysis in real-time
- Maximum processing power for overnight batch processing
- Data protection and fast restore times

The screenshot shows the 2bMore website interface. At the top left is the 2bMore logo with the tagline 'online database marketing'. Navigation links include 'Home | Contact | Werken bij'. A main menu lists 'Software | Diensten | Klanten | Over 2bMore'. The central content area features a large image of a person standing on a hill overlooking a valley, with the headline 'De kracht van individuele klantdata'. Below this, there are two columns of text. The left column is titled 'Ons aanbod' and lists services: Marketing databases, Campaigne management, Web-personalisatie, and Marketing automation. The right column is titled 'Nieuws' and contains three news items with dates and brief descriptions, each with a 'hier' link. At the bottom right of the news section is a '> Meer nieuws' link.

“We link in real-time to a SAP system at Springer’s. Thousands of XML messages are exchanged with it every day.”

on the level of online information on surfing and clicking behaviour. And this is exactly where we can help.”

2bMore offers a suite of services based on Software-as-a-Service (SaaS). Via heavily secured batch transfers or real-time data flows, customer information comes together in a data warehouse: one single data set per customer organisation serves as a foundation for the analysis. Here, Combell provides an efficient basic architecture, founded on Microsoft Active Directory, SharePoint and SQL Server, which can receive and process information from 2bMore customers at any time. “For Springer, a German publishing company of world renown, we have a real-time link with their SAP system, based on web services and XML files. Thousands of messages are exchanged through this channel every day.”

Flexibility and time-to-market

For 2bMore, Software-as-a-Service is the perfect way to continuously enhance its data analysis methods, without the added complexity of version management. For customers, the formula offers a low financial and practical threshold. Each new project starts from the existing SaaS environment, so that 2bMore and the customer can put as much effort as possible into integration and functional needs. For marketing departments, this is the best path to quick results.

“We have observed that in a typical project, it takes a lot of time to open up a database, while the functional return is quite low. So we created a standard tool to do this, thereby becoming able to spend 90% of our time working on the database itself”, says Eelco Gerritsma. “Not until a project phase is finalised, can a new customer’s ICT department in-source the application if necessary – this is sometimes necessary for legal reasons. About 80% of our customers choose the SaaS model, because we often offer a higher level of service than their in-house ICT department.” By choosing SaaS as a business model, 2bMore has become very dependent on its Internet services. That is why Combell guarantees optimum

availability of the entire environment through well-documented SLAs. “When our customers ask for service warranties, we favour transparency and refer them to our agreement with Combell. And they usually think it’s fine that way.”

Efficient analysis

The analysis of large data sets requires impressive processing power. That is why 2bMore has its own network environment, including a domain controller. “In the early days, we started with only one Combell server. Now, we have twenty that are connected via our own production network and a separate management network for maintenance tasks like e.g. back-ups”, recounts Eelco Gerritsma. “We also need our own domain, because we share a large volume of data between several servers.”

For optimum performance, the SQL databases are always in clusters of two servers. “We use clustering technology because of its performance and uptime. If a server fails, the database remains accessible, albeit at only 50 % of its capacity. Our domain controller too runs on a cluster. All network connections are redundant. That way, we avoid technical failure that could make our service unavailable.”

2bMore customers consult their marketing solutions at any time via the public Internet. By means of a separate network, they have access to the web servers, which in turn retrieve the requested information from the underlying databases. “We use load balancing, because the web servers have to handle a lot of traffic. The web servers themselves actually don’t contain any information. Everything comes from the database.”

The actual analysis of customer information is performed every night, so that marketers at the customer’s facility can work with the most recent information as soon as the next day. “Those are heavy processes that we want to complete before 6 AM. That’s why, a few years back, we chose the heaviest dedicated servers Combell could offer at the time. Every database server has several

2BMORE IDENTIKIT

2bMore helps large organisations gather data of diverse origin and analyse them to obtain precious information on their customers and prospects. This company from IJsselstein (The Netherlands) offers its expertise via Software-as-a-Service, integrated to fit the customer’s systems. By combining large data sets from ERP, CRM, invoicing systems, web analysis, etc., a very detailed image is obtained of each customer or prospect. 2bMore helps organisations like ABN-Amro, Amsterdam RAI, KLM, Kluwer, Nederlandse Spoorwegen and Springer use this valuable information via targeted marketing campaigns.

More information on: www.2bMore.nl

“For years in a row, we have been doubling our capacity at Combell’s.”

“Data protection is our top priority”

processors, maximum random-access memory and over 500 GB of SAN storage. We chose the heaviest specification for which Combell had replacement equipment on standby at any time.”

When new customers join us or when existing customers experience major data increase, Combell can rapidly add a cluster of two database servers. “For years in a row, we have in fact been doubling our capacity at Combell’s.”

Privacy and data protection

Organisations that store customer information for large multinational organisations should pay attention to security and privacy. 2bMore collects information related to the online behaviour of customers and visitors, in accord with the current legal standards. “Dutch law, for instance, is very strict when it comes down to using ‘cookies’ and ‘opt-in’ systems. Since 2012, a new European Privacy law actually requires all member states to comply with much stricter rules in this regard. A transparent and efficient management is crucial here, so that one always has a complete logging at one’s disposal, including an audit trail, in the event of a dispute.”

Of course, access to the stored information is also strictly secured. “Data protection is our top priority”, says Eelco Gerritsma. The ICT protection scheme is therefore installed on several levels, for instance on the level of network access and database. For public access to 2bMore’s web servers, Combell offers, among other things, a fully managed firewall infrastructure, with extra rules to detect possible attacks in real-time. The databases themselves aren’t accessible from outside, but are managed through a separate management network. “Combell secures network access. On top of that, we have a supplementary security layer inside the databases. There too, access to the actual data is under strict management.”

“In the yearly infrastructure security audit performed by PwC, we always come out as best. We are part of a benchmark there, along with a few big names in ICT. Evidently, this is a huge compliment to Combell.”

Efficient data protection

Combell protects the information belonging to 2bMore and its customers from downtime and data loss. The entire infrastructure is redundant, thanks to server clustering, virtualisation and redundant network access. “This has already proven its usefulness”, says Eelco Gerritsma. “Redundancy works extremely well. In a cluster, the other half takes over, while a new server is immediately started up if a virtual server fails. Meanwhile, the problem is solved and the load is again balanced. Thus, nobody suffers any inconvenience. Although it is noticeable that performance is a little bit slower, everything remains perfectly operational.”

An efficient backup infrastructure based on hard disks in a storage network (SAN or storage area network) guarantees fast saving and restore times. “We already used the restore function a couple of times, not on account of a mishap but because we wanted to go back to an older version of certain scripts or results. In such cases, a restore can indeed be performed in a jiffy. Restoring an entire data warehouse takes a little longer of course.” Thanks to Combell’s fast restore times, 2bMore can also easily use a ‘real’ data set for simulations in its testing environment.

2bMore’s backup solution is based on Microsoft Data Protection Manager (DPM). A copy of the data is always on standby in the storage network, which also makes a copy on another DPM server located in another data centre. “Thus, we immediately have offsite backup at our disposal, should a calamity strike the entire data centre. This is a firm condition for many of our customers.”

Warranties and trust

Why did 2bMore finally choose Combell? “When we started back in 2005, we were mostly looking for a hosting partner that would allow us to work in a flexible manner with our customers. Combell leaves a fair amount of freedom if you purchase dedicated servers, while the company doesn’t make a sore point of service warranties. They also have ‘dedicated’ people for our environment. They know us as customers, but they also know our technical profile, which allows for a fast response to our problems.”



Eelco Gerritsma, 2bMore: “In PwC’s yearly safety audit, we always come out best. This is a huge compliment to Combell.”

“It’s all a matter of good consultation, open communication, give and take... And this can only be achieved if you trust each other. With good agreements, we can make some changes on our servers ourselves, with Combell’s staff acting in an advisory role based on their many years of experience. Naturally, they are also proactive. We are very happy with this working method.”

More info about this solution?
Contact one of our account managers on
0800-8-567890