



CSfD enhances customer service with new B2B application

CSfD realised its customers needed a comprehensive Web-based wholesale distribution system. It was, however, vital that this was integrated with their existing COBOL application.



The Client

Computer Systems for Distribution (CSfD) is a leading supplier of wholesale distribution systems, providing total business solutions for the distribution and logistics sector. Founded in 1990, the Northampton-based company has an established reputation in the marketplace, with systems installed in a number of market-leading companies. CSfD develops open systems solutions that can be used with most hardware and software platforms, and integrated with existing applications and systems.

The Challenge

In order to continue this success, CSfD realised that they needed to focus on e-business. Traditionally, CSfD has worked with Acucobol and Micro Focus COBOL-based systems, which have been developed over many years, and are rich in functionality. However, CSfD realised they needed to provide customers with a comprehensive Web-based B2B (business to business) wholesale distribution system.

CSfD also knew that the Web application must be integrated with their existing COBOL application, to use the functionally-rich business logic and data. Any development from scratch would be too time consuming.

The Solution

CSfD undertook a review of the technology options available from various vendors to integrate their existing COBOL applications with the proposed Web application.

They quickly came to the conclusion that the Web application making use of a component-based architecture to integrate with the COBOL application was the only option to provide straight-through processing. This would provide the performance and scalability essential for successful e-business applications.

CSfD had used our U/SQL ODBC middleware product for some time, and were pleased with its speed and functionality. They established that our ApplIntegrate product could not only provide a means of componentising the key COBOL functionality, but could also offer a way of developing the Web application itself.

Client >

Computer Systems for Distribution (CSfD)

Sector >

Software

Project >

Application Integration

"Advanced provides the missing link that enables the Web designer to easily integrate new e-business applications with an organisation's existing data."

Chris Hewetson >
Managing Director >
CSfD

CSfD enhances customer service with new B2B app

By employing a combination of our Data and Language Component Adapters for Acucobol and Micro Focus COBOL, and the Web Application Adapter, CSfD was able to create an example of a B2B interactive order processing application in less than two months. The example contained customer registration, product search results, product details, basket details, final order details, back orders list, and forward orders list etc.

Chris Hewetson, Managing Director at CSfD, explains: "A successful e-business system needs to be fully integrated with the core business functions. This provides the best possible service through the use of current information, and removes the need for manual intervention at any stage. It makes sense to ensure optimum reuse of legacy applications, and also to tightly integrate them into the e-business solution."

Benefits

With AppIntegrate, CSfD managed to simplify a myriad of functionality into 25 services in some 10 components, created from existing legacy business logic code. The benefits of being able to do so are extensive, reducing development time from years to months, and saving money by using existing code instead of having to create something new.

Chris Hewetson adds: "A major benefit to using AppIntegrate is that it allows existing development resources (COBOL programmers etc) to undertake the integration with no retraining required. This again reduces the cost and risk inherent in bringing in new skills, and retains the business knowledge that programmers have built up."

Thanks to the Data and Language Component Adapters, CSfD haven't had to replace or recreate any of their applications.

Chris Hewetson continues: "We needed to develop a B2B e-trading Web application that closely integrated with our comprehensive COBOL-based distribution applications. The solution had to be open so that our customers could choose their preferred Web server and platform. This ranged from Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS) on Windows NT/2000 to APACHE on Unix. Using the Web Application Adapter we were able to develop, within a very tight timeframe, the portable Web application and connections to the Data and Language Adapters. These together provided an efficient and seamless integration into our applications."

CSfD haven't needed to replace tried and tested, core business applications. Employing our technology, they have been able to update their customers' IT strategy, enabling their distribution systems and applications to become available via all browsers, WAP phones and PDAs. This means their whole supply chain, from wholesaler to consumer, has been simplified as applications have become visible and available to a wider range of authorised users.

In real terms, it will result in a much more instantaneous and satisfying retail experience. Ordering an out-of-stock or non-stocked item will no longer be a 'wait and see' process, with an instant answer on the availability and/or delivery of an item. The retailer will also benefit from being able to see an exact profile of their stock order, allowing them to manage their business more effectively.

Chris Hewetson sums up: "Advanced provides the missing link that enables the Web designer to easily integrate new e-business applications with an organisation's existing data."

"It makes sense to ensure optimum reuse of legacy applications, and also to tightly integrate them into the e-business solution."

Chris Hewetson >
Managing Director >
CSfD

More information

w oneadvanced.com
t +44(0) 8451 605 555
e hello@oneadvanced.com

Ditton Park, Riding Court Road, Datchet, SL3 9LL

Advanced Computer Software Group Limited is a company registered in England and Wales under company number 05965280, whose registered office is Ditton Park, Riding Court Road, Datchet, SL3 9LL. A full list of its trading subsidiaries is available at www.oneadvanced.com/legal-privacy.