



REI

Micro Focus RUMBA makes the connection for REI

Challenge

Rei's decision to implement client/server computing created issues with a core software application that the retailer had to address.

Solution

- Micro Focus RUMBA®

REI

Seattle-based national retailer REI is a unique company with an interesting history. Founded in 1938 by a group of mountaineers seeking quality climbing equipment, the company now operates 48 retail stores nationwide. It runs a domestic and international mail-order business, as well as a full-service adventure travel company. While REI's business history may be uncommon, its information system issues and needs are all too familiar. "What our users care about is connectivity to the host," says Betsy Cushman, REI Systems Support Supervisor.

Connectivity problems hindered performance

REI's users are on several hundred PCs located throughout its chain of stores. The hosts, which are located within the headquarters facility and distribution center, include an IBM® mainframe and four AS/400s. Connectivity problems began to materialize when REI moved its PCs onto Windows and a core application no longer worked.

"Very early on, we discovered that the product we had been using just couldn't handle a Windows environment," says Betsy Cushman, Systems Support Supervisor at REI. "The product had some conventional memory problems on the PC. In fact, it wasn't ever architected to be a good citizen for PC-conventional memory. It worked fine for DOS, but when we upgraded to Windows, it didn't work at all." This view is endorsed by Dave Sellinger, Information Center Analyst at REI, who adds, "the product also required us to do a lot of hot-keying." As REI had made the decision to implement client/server computing, providing connectivity in a Microsoft Windows environment was not the only criteria: APPC driver support functionality and the ability to work with software from Progress were also critical.

Highlights

- Easy customization and smooth integration between platforms
- Consistent look and feel from platform to platform
- Improved user productivity across disparate systems and platforms

"Customizing your keyboard and fonts is a snap. It's so much easier than other products that require you to go into edit mode. With Micro Focus RUMBA software, you can actually do it on the fly."

Dave Sellinger,
 Information Center Analyst, REI

RUMBA from Micro Focus provided the answer

Looking for a solution, REI tested RUMBA from Micro Focus. A pioneer in the Microsoft Windows connectivity market, Micro Focus' connectivity software product takes full advantage of the Microsoft graphical environment. "We tested Micro Focus RUMBA and it worked," Cushman says. "We tested the other leading connectivity product, and it simply did not perform."

Meeting REI's APPC driver requirement was straightforward because Micro Focus aggressively supports IBM® Advanced Program-to-Program Communications (APPC) - in fact, the APPC engine forms the foundation upon which RUMBA software products are built, but getting RUMBA and Progress to work together raised some problems. "Progress and RUMBA software didn't co-exist very well at the PTF level," Earl says. "Fortunately, both Micro Focus' and Progress' personnel were extremely helpful in sorting it out."

"Micro Focus Rumba software is a very reliable product. We install it on the PC and configure it here, ship the box to our stores, and they take it out and plug it in. RUMBA software is there when you need it; RUMBA software works."

Betsy Cushman,
Systems Support Supervisor REI

Cooperation and collaborative working delivers benefits

That attitude of cooperation impressed Cushman. "One of our biggest issues in a multivendor environment is getting the vendors to work together to solve technical problems," she says. "We were fortunate to have been working with Micro Focus and Progress - they concentrated on how to fix the problem, not where to fix the blame." Micro Focus' support operation, Sellinger adds, is always responsive and easy to reach.

"Installation of RUMBA was easy," Sellinger says. "We were able to make some quick changes to the procedures that made installation faster and easier for us." RUMBA's consistent interface across platforms also improved productivity for REI's programmers. However, Micro Focus

RUMBA software's real value, according to John Earl, REI Senior Systems Programmer, is in its presentation manager and workstation functionality. "I was pleasantly surprised by a number of product features," he says. "For example, you can do file transfer directly from an AS/400 screen. You just click on transfer, send, or receive - there's no need to leave the AS/400. The edit function is also superb, particularly the ability to cut and paste from an AS/400 screen. We have four AS/400s, and I sometimes have to apply extended commands - which can be up to 130 characters - to all four systems. Thanks to RUMBA, I have only to type it once, not four separate times."

Ease of use increases productivity

According to Sellinger users also appreciate the ease and functionality RUMBA brings to their desktops. "Of course, the first thing is how much easier the Windows environment is to use when compared to DOS," he says. "But there's so much more. People are doing things they could not do before, like running multiple AS/400 and mainframe sessions simultaneously."

"Micro Focus RUMBA is a very reliable product," says Cushman. "We install it on the PC and configure it here, ship the box to our stores, and they take it out and plug it in." Sellinger adds, "RUMBA software is there when you need it; RUMBA software works."

Future plans include the possibility of using Micro Focus RUMBA for UNIX to provide connectivity to REI's UNIX platforms, as well as using RUMBA software's support for ODBC as REI adds decision support and client/server tools.

About Micro Focus

Micro Focus, a member of the FTSE 250, provides innovative software that allows companies to dramatically improve the business value of their enterprise applications. Micro Focus Enterprise Application Modernization, Testing and Management software enables customers' business applications to respond rapidly to market changes and embrace modern architectures with reduced cost and risk.

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