

URL: www.curtze.com
 Industry: Wholesale food service distribution
 Country: United States



C.A. Curtze Company & SalesPro Technologies, Inc.

Leading food distributor delivers mobile and web solutions, through core business innovation – achieves ROI in three months

Challenge

Food distributors Curtze were faced with the challenge of providing web and mobile applications for its customers, which were already available through its industry rivals in their highly competitive market space.

Their specialist division, SalesPro Technologies, desired to preserve their existing investment in COBOL centric business rules while exploiting more modern application interfaces to deliver both agile and interactive solutions to their customers. However, with thousands of existing programs and hundreds of thousands of lines of application code to modernize, they were finding it a very formidable challenge.

Solution

- Micro Focus Xcentrity® Business Information Server

About Curtze

Based in Erie, Pennsylvania, Curtze is a full food service provider, serving eight States in the US. As well as canned goods, frozen foods, paper products, chemicals, dairy and other staples, they have a unique 'plate program' which includes fresh meat and fresh seafood. Curtze's commitment to quality and customer satisfaction has made them a major force in the business for over 130 years.

SalesPro Technologies is a division of Curtze providing a suite of food and beverage wholesale distribution applications for sales staff, both for its parent company and for third parties.

The challenge of new technologies

Curtze had a rich heritage in the food service industry and a significant investment in its technology. But with the mobile revolution, the need to deliver web and mobile-based applications was becoming more and more apparent.

Anthony Darden, Vice President of SalesPro Technologies, explains: "We needed a solution that would preserve the many years of proven COBOL logic running our business but also provide a flexible architecture that allowed freedom for user interface development and future technology adoption"

Highlights

- Initial year financial savings of \$100,000
- Retention of key corporate customers and ability to secure new business
- New ability to offer a web and a mobile customer experience
- A three month return on investment (ROI)

"A few months ago we couldn't compete with other companies who offered mobile applications – now we can outperform them. With the performance and strength of the back-end COBOL systems to underpin our new web applications and mobile interfaces we are more than ready to innovate for the future."

Anthony Darden,
 Vice President
 SalesPro Technologies, Inc.
 (division of Curtze)

The company turned to Micro Focus to provide that solution and the key to the solution was Micro Focus' COBOL environment for developing and deploying Web Services. This technology allows the provision of Service Oriented Architecture (SOA).

Darden immediately recognized the potential of this technology. "We couldn't avoid the latest trends in the marketplace. So when Micro Focus announced Xcentrinity® Business Information Server (XBIS) support for its **extend**® product line which provided rich tools for web and mobile development and a platform for future migration to its Visual COBOL® product, we were anxious to get started as fast as possible. It was a no-brainer. A few months ago we couldn't compete with other companies who offered mobile applications – now we can outperform them. With the performance and strength of the back-end COBOL systems to underpin our new web applications and mobile interfaces we are more than ready to innovate for the future."

The application infrastructure at Curtze utilizes Windows Server 2008 R2, Windows Server 2003, and Open Server 5 (UNIX), all running in a virtual server farm, leveraging VMWare. Application development infrastructure is running Windows 7. To support its user interface development efforts, Curtze acquired Microsoft's Visual Studio 2010 Professional. Now using the combination of Micro Focus Xcentrinity® BIS and Microsoft tools, Curtze has the freedom to embrace any UI technology required for future business initiatives. Additionally, the company's heavy investment in COBOL-based systems was preserved, and re-purposed for new application innovation.

Making e-Business easy

Darden is even more impressed by the results in practice. "Xcentrinity® BIS was our savior. **extend**® 9.1 allowed us to recompile all our former 8.1 code and tie this into Xcentrinity® BIS to deploy in the mobile and web spaces."

Today, SalesPro Technologies can offer the e-business solutions customers demand. When customers visit its web site, a COBOL object provides a seamless and efficient interface with their COBOL data and applications, rendering that data to the desired user interface – web or mobile. The data remains highly secure and scalable - thousands of orders can be processed simultaneously. SalesPro has also seen improvements in application performance with this new application solution.

Darden says: "Our users typically have a smart phone of some kind and frequently ask about tablet compatibility, so this new versatility online has been positively received. Usability has grown tenfold thanks to much improved and modernized UI design, with customers – and especially new and younger users – liking the fresh new looks. Scalability has also improved thanks in part to building applications using both Xcentrinity® BIS and Microsoft IIS, two platforms where scalability is second nature."

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The business benefits

Being able to do business with online and mobile customers is vital for Curtze, and with its new capabilities Micro Focus has helped SalesPro deliver a new, innovative and market ready solution. Where once new technology was a threat, the team can now stay ahead of the curve and actually welcome changes in technology, and leverage it to their business advantage.

"Our sales market has grown. We can work in new areas, with companies with smaller budgets for example. We will be able to offer lower cost, portable solutions. So our product offerings can reach a broader audience and that's great for business," says Darden.

In addition to refining and developing the mobile solutions that are vital in the current market, the company is also set to embark on a redesign of their flagship product, SalesPro. "I see Micro Focus as key to the project," says Darden, "They provide the tools which will let us transform SalesPro into the Visual COBOL space. That will let us deliver the additional modernization it so desperately needs."

The financial picture

Development costs (both labor and product) were surprisingly low. Curtze has saved approximately \$100,000 over a twelve month period.

The ROI was generated in just three months, substantially under the initial target of six months. The management team were surprised and impressed by the effectiveness of the Micro Focus solution.

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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