

# Miami Herald

Micro Focus® Verastream® Host Integrator helps the *Miami Herald* roll out new customer self-service site in just four weeks.

## Overview

Serving a million readers daily (and 1.2 million on Sundays), the *Miami Herald* is a prize-winning newspaper and a flagship of the Knight Ridder publishing chain. The *Herald* wanted to improve customer service by unifying legacy application functionality with web-based customer-facing applications.

Verastream Host Integrator enabled the *Herald* to seamlessly integrate their HP e3000-based legacy applications with web technology and build a customer self-service solution.

## Challenge

Because they were paying per-call rates to the Knight Ridder customer contact center, the *Herald* was eager to introduce the cost-saving measures made possible by fully automated

**“Verastream was just what we needed to provide a real-time web interface to our circulation system, improving customer service, streamlining operations, and saving us money.”**

### TODD WILLIAMS

Assistant Director for Systems Development  
*Miami Herald*

web self-service. Todd Williams, assistant director for systems development at the *Herald*, knew that the ultimate solution would be a customer web interface synched up closely with the newspaper's back-end systems.

Up to this point, the *Herald* was dealing with separate HP e3000-based applications, which over the years had evolved into distinct information silos. Williams wanted to leverage those systems to improve the way the company connected to customers.

Although subscriber transactions were available over the Internet, there was no real-time processing involved. The *Herald* wanted to reach out to customers and acquire new accounts by offering state-of-the-art business practices, including online subscriber transactions—e.g., stopping service temporarily, re-starting service, checking account status, and making a payment.

## Solution

Verastream Host Integrator gave the *Herald* a way to offer those online functions without altering host code or disrupting daily operations. Verastream encapsulates mainframe data and logic via the screen interface, exposing business processes as web services, XML, Java, and .NET components. The services or components can be mixed, matched, and reused to build composite applications with a new look and feel.



## The Miami Herald

### At a Glance

#### ■ Industry

Communications

#### ■ Location

United States

#### ■ Challenge

There was no way to automate back-end processes for customer self-service.

#### ■ Solution

Use Verastream Host Integrator to integrate legacy host functionality with an easy web interface.

#### ■ Results

- + Improved customer satisfaction, with real-time back-end processing.
- + Implemented a rapid-application development platform for future projects.
- + Cut costs via streamlined operations.

**“Our vision of what it’s possible to do with Verastream has expanded as we’ve used the technology. Now that we’ve seen what it can do, we’re planning all kinds of future projects involving other legacy applications.”**

**TODD WILLIAMS**

Assistant Director for Systems Development  
*Miami Herald*

The *Herald's* web application was developed using Active Server Pages that communicate directly with Verastream. If customers want to access their account information through the web interface, they can enter their account number or a combination of their phone number and house address. In the latter case, Verastream finds the account by phone number and then verifies that the house number is correct before granting access through the web site.

The HP e3000 legacy applications make liberal use of pop-up windows and scrolling menus, which Verastream handles as well. To maximize performance, Verastream session pools are used, reducing the need to re-establish connection and login execution processes.

Because Verastream allows for the abstraction of host data, it brought the convenience of table procedures to the process. With table procedures, ASPs can make a single call to Verastream that navigates throughout the host, collects data from a variety of entities, filters the result set, and returns exactly what is needed. This method minimizes the round trips between the web server and the Verastream server, so Verastream can communicate at maximum speed with the *Herald's* HP e3000 host.

Client-side form validation was also implemented to ensure data integrity before sending it to the host. By notifying the customer of errors before submitting the form data to the host, the interface is much faster and easier to use than before the Verastream solution.

Thanks to Verastream's "excellent usability," said Williams, the *Herald* IT staff was able to write the web scripts for the implementation with a minimum of support from our company. He added that the project at the *Herald* was completed in about a month.

### Results

Customer response to the online service has been consistently positive. As use of the website steadily builds momentum, site traffic has tripled since its early rollout stage. The application efficiency allows customers to enter a delivery change order as late as 7 p.m. and still get results the next day.

New subscribers who sign up via the website are set up for EZ Renew, a *Herald* service that automatically charges customers' credit cards when their subscriptions are due to expire. More than 1,500 existing subscribers have converted to this payment system as well. The benefit to the customer: convenience. The benefit to the *Herald*: an ongoing guaranteed subscriber base.

"Verastream was just what we needed to provide a real-time web interface to our circulation system," Williams said. "The website is substantially improving customer service, streamlining our operations, and saving us money." In fact, Williams reported, the *Herald* saved US\$16,000 in the cost of serving customers the first year alone.

"Our vision of what it's possible to do with Verastream has expanded as we've used the technology," said Williams. "Now that we've seen what it can do, we're planning all kinds of future projects involving other legacy applications."



### Micro Focus

#### UK Headquarters

United Kingdom  
+44 (0) 1635 565200

#### U.S. Headquarters

Seattle, Washington  
206 217 7100  
800 872 2829

Additional contact information and office locations:  
[www.attachmate.com](http://www.attachmate.com)