WOW! Internet, Cable, and Phone

Thanks to Micro Focus® Verastream®, Wow! Internet, Cable, and Phone modernized its legacy assets to streamline business processes and cut costs.

Overview

WOW! Internet, Cable, and Phone has been a leading provider of bundled services to residential and commercial customers in Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio since 1996.

WOW!'s strong competitive advantage can be attributed to a simple philosophy: deliver a customer experience that lives up to the company's name. Rex Kennedy, vice president of applications and software development at WOW!, knew the company could improve customer service applications by streamlining access to the billing program. "It's a mainframe-based application, with no open APIs, so our internal systems were having to access billing data in a manual and non-traditional fashion," he said.

The company chose Verastream to modernize this critical system.

Challenge

The WOW! billing system is a core application housing critical data, and navigating the

application was problematic. With multiple WOW! business interfaces spanning a variety of applications, quick account lookups and expanded customer self-service were becoming elusive.

WOW! customers needed to log in whenever they wanted to view email, account information, or online content, but authentication called for multiple billing-record lookups. The critical and recurring nature of this lookup process meant it must perform flawlessly or risk making customers unhappy. But due to growing customer requirements, the interface was in constant danger of being overloaded.

WOW! needed to modernize this problematic system. Their goal was to build fast, automated processes on top of real-time integration so that the resulting business functions could be reused across applications. A traditional screen-scraping product had already failed to keep up with demand. "What we needed was an industrial-strength, bullet-proof solution that didn't require a lot of maintenance," Kennedy said.
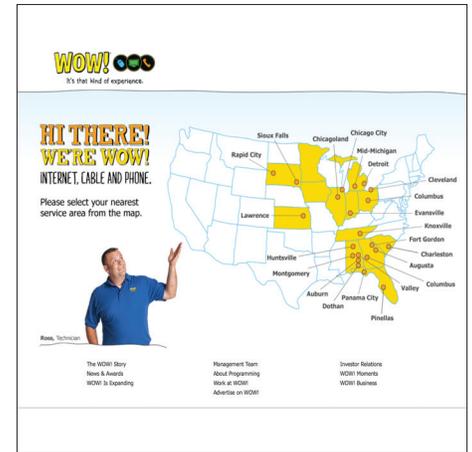
Solution

A satisfied user of both Reflection® and Extra!® terminal emulators, WOW! learned of Verastream from Don Koretos, manager of software development at WOW!. Following a rigorous evaluation, the company chose Verastream to expose its mainframe information as web services that could be mixed, matched, and reused.

> "With Verastream, when you service-enable one app, you have actually done it for a bunch more."

AMOL SHAH
Director, Application and Software Development
WOW!

At a Glance

■ **Industry**
Communications

■ **Location**
United States

■ **Challenge**
Core legacy application was hard to access and integrate.

■ **Solution**
Use Verastream to service enable mainframe-based billing system for reuse in new business processes.

■ **Results**
+ Accelerated processing by a factor of five.
+ Eliminated expensive per-transaction fees.
+ Improved customer service.
+ Established a rapid application-development platform for ongoing projects.

Amol Shah, director of software development, reported that his teams mapped the 3270 screens using Verastream Web Builder, which automates the deployment of web applications, component interfaces, and web services from abstracted legacy functions.

Because all of the applications at WOW! are built in .NET, Verastream Web Builder delivered another benefit by automatically translating all modeled screens to the .NET platform. "Having an interface that converts it for you is so beneficial," said Koretos, who also pointed out the value of a lighter footprint on the user side and easier accommodation of different kinds of clients including Windows applications, web sites, and PDAs.

"From a development standpoint, Verastream gives you more control over your applications, without relying on a third-party interface sitting on the desktop," Koretos said. He explained that there are numerous steps in an order transaction where input and retrieval of data are required. "In the process, systems integration is happening and it's all passing through Verastream."

Results
Shah reported that Verastream's intelligent session handling made transactions five times faster than WOW!'s previous solution. That's an obvious benefit for WOW!'s 1,000 internal users, but it also provides a better customer experience. When customers log in to check email, for example, the speed of the new authentication process is noticeable—and welcome.

WOW! is also cutting costs as a result of the Verastream implementation because they can now minimize use of third-party service providers. And they can keep per-transaction fees to a minimum because Verastream Host Integrator has enhanced and created efficiencies in the way users access data.

According to Shah, all WOW! business processes—from customer self-service, to the provisioning side, to the dispatch side—rely on fast access to data residing on the billing system. So his IT teams have begun creating other applications, using those original Verastream-generated services, for both internal and external users.

Shah said he likes Verastream's ability to "divvy up the application" and use selected functionality because it helps WOW! work toward a services-oriented architecture. "Now we have a really strong foundation to build on," he said. "With Verastream, when you service-enable one app, you have actually done it for a bunch more."

Meanwhile, Koretos has already looked beyond WOW!'s mainframe systems to successfully run scripts on some of WOW!'s UNIX-based applications. "We plan to convert all of all our applications to this services approach," he said. "It'll all be integrated."

Kennedy concluded by saying, "We're big fans of Verastream, and we're using it everywhere we can."

About Micro Focus
The Micro Focus product portfolios enable enterprise customers to unlock the value in their business data and logic to improve their competitive advantage through innovation.
www.microfocus.com

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

MICRO FOCUS®