Teleflora

Visual COBOL enables endless optimization opportunities with new tools for the modern developer.

Overview

Headquartered in Los Angeles, California, Teleflora has over 13,000 member florists throughout the U.S. and Canada, with an additional 20,000 affiliated florists outside North America. This extensive network, coupled with the Teleflora commitment to exceptional customer service, means that when you send flowers from Teleflora, you can be confident that you're sending the best.

Challenge

In the late 1990s, Teleflora purchased a back-end ERP system to help streamline flower orders from various channels, such as teleflora.com, directly from shops, or through partnerships with major companies. Orders are routed

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>
> **TODD BOYD**
> Senior Software Architect
> Teleflora

to the nearest member florist for processing and delivery. During a holiday period, such as Mother's Day, Teleflora will process millions of flower orders.

To make the ERP system work for Teleflora, substantial customization was required, as Todd Boyd, Senior Software Architect at Teleflora, explains: "We operate quite a custom business model, so an off-the-shelf solution needed to be flexible enough to work for us. Thankfully this ERP system allowed us source code control and we were able to develop our own custom modules in COBOL. The development capability was limited, but it worked for us at the time."

However, as time went on, Boyd noted some clear challenges emerging: "ERP system upgrades were problematic for us. Our custom code would be impacted by an upgrade and we might need to change or even rewrite modules. With limited development capability we couldn't accommodate all business requirements which came to us, even when we could see they would improve our business model. And, finally, when the ERP vendor talked about moving their application to Java from COBOL, we realized our custom modules would not be supported. With 20+ years of business logic and thousands COBOL programs invested in a business-critical system, we could not risk losing this, and had to find another solution."

teleflora®

At a Glance

■ **Industry**
Business Services

■ **Location**
California, USA

■ **Challenge**
Teleflora develops and maintains custom COBOL code that augments an off the shelf ERP solution. Every upgrade cycle requires time-intensive rewrites or changes. Teleflora needs to streamline its development processes and be more responsive to business requirements. It can't afford to lose decades of business logic in its custom COBOL code.

■ **Products and Services**
Micro Focus Visual COBOL for Visual Studio
Micro Focus COBOL Server

■ **Results**
+ A user friendly and modern development experience integrated within Visual Studio
+ Preserved and extended 20+ year investment in COBOL business logic across thousands of programs
+ Increased competitive advantage through interface improvements
+ Effective collaboration between end users and development
+ Streamlined development processes while retaining custom application logic written in COBOL

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Solution

Teleflora looked at rewriting the solution but the timeframe to do this just wasn't realistic. A proof-of-concept with Micro Focus™ Visual COBOL by OpenText™ was undertaken to determine if this might offer a solution. Teleflora's most complex data entry screen was converted as a working model to show the users the possibilities. Its enthusiastic reception sealed the deal and Micro Focus™ Visual COBOL was introduced over the next year. Boyd discusses the implementation process: "The code conversion was really quite straightforward with [Micro Focus™] Visual COBOL and we had a really helpful training session from Micro Focus (now part of OpenText). Overall, we had great support. If we needed assistance, Micro Focus (now part of OpenText) was there."

Teleflora developers used a terminal emulator on a character-mode screen as screen editor. The difference between developing with that and Micro Focus™ Visual COBOL's modern IDE was just like night and day, as Boyd explains: "We have COBOL developers used to the green screen environment. For some of them this transition took some adjusting, but others really love the new IDE. It's opened up our talent acquisition as we can now hire programmers with .NET experience since COBOL is taught easily within [Micro Focus™] Visual COBOL."

Innovations within Micro Focus™ Visual COBOL not only deliver a more efficient development environment, but they enable integration with other business systems and allow business user their choice of modern user interface.

End users are starting to realise the possibilities and are changing their mind set around development. Boyd: "In the past we've often had to say 'no' to our users' requests, because it went beyond the limits of our development capabilities within the ERP system. Now, we can really make substantial interface improvements to the system to create competitive advantage. Recently we had a request to integrate into Google maps for ease of use in finding the nearest Teleflora partner. Why not? It's all possible now."

Results

The move to Micro Focus™ Visual COBOL has delivered a more efficient and user friendly development environment. Business users are actively involved in determining process and system improvements so that clear competitive advantage can be created with a best-in-class solution.

Boyd concludes: "[Micro Focus™] Visual COBOL has enabled us to retain decades of valuable business intelligence, streamline our development practices, and respond faster to business requirements. We can also investigate moving to a more agile development model, fully supported by [Micro Focus™] Visual COBOL. Although at the core this was a technology-led decision, the impact has reached far beyond. It changed the mind set of our users to view IT as an enabler and a business partner which sets us up perfectly for future success."

Learn more at
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