



R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company Uses DataDirect ClientBuilder to Develop an Intranet-based Human Resources Application

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company was founded in 1875 when 25-year-old Richard Joshua Reynolds started a chewing-tobacco manufacturing operation in the town that ultimately became Winston-Salem, N.C. Today, the company is ranked as the second-largest U.S. cigarette manufacturer with approximately a 23% share of the U.S. market.

Like other large, established companies with thousands of employees, R.J. Reynolds wanted to improve the efficiency of its Human Resources (HR) administration — specifically, to manage employee information requests, account updates and other routine tasks.

Vision: Self-Service Human Resources Intranet Application

R.J. Reynolds' vision was an on-line, self-service system that would have more direct functionality with the employee; such as enabling employees to view medical, dental and life insurance coverage; paycheck information and vacation balances; and to make choices online during an annual open enrollment period for benefit plans. The company also wanted to give employees a tool to update their personal information online for HR records.

Challenge: Interface between Backend Mainframe Data and Intranet Server

The IT staff concluded that the company's Intranet was the ideal conduit for delivering the benefit-related information to employees. The key challenge was to identify a software application that could interface between the rich storehouse of data on R.J. Reynolds' IBM 390 mainframe computer and the Intranet server that employees used to access the information.

Solution: DataDirect ClientBuilder Transparently Accesses Host Data from the Web

As soon as the IT group formally identified requirements, the development staff began to look for a suitable software application that could provide the Intranet server with transparent access to the critical legacy-based data. Through research, R.J. Reynolds identified DataDirect ClientBuilder as a tool for accessing host data from the Web.

After a comprehensive review of multiple products and Proof-of-Concepts, ClientBuilder's proven stability with Windows NT, combined with its superior ease-of-use, made the decision easy for R.J. Reynolds.

Goal:

Deliver self-service, human resource-related information to employees via the company's intranet, interfacing between mainframe data and the intranet server.

Why R.J. Reynolds DataDirect:

DataDirect ClientBuilder met their requirements for transparent access to legacy-based data, as well as proven stability with Windows NT and superior ease-of-use.

Business Benefits:

The HR self-service application, which leverages DataDirect ClientBuilder as the critical middleware link, enabled R.J. Reynolds to eliminate a costly, externally-supplied interactive voice response system for handling annual benefits enrollments. In addition, employees are able to directly obtain a wide range of benefit information online, enhancing efficiency of the HR function.

Technical Benefits:

DataDirect ClientBuilder enabled R.J. Reynolds to leverage investments in existing mainframe applications and because of the tool's ease-of-use, they incurred minimal software training and services costs.



The resulting solution, dubbed "HR Direct" by R.J. Reynolds, consists of an Intranet presentation server that delivers an assortment of Web pages. The presentation server connects with ClientBuilder, which then interfaces with the backend legacy system and accesses the needed data.

"ClientBuilder assisted us in delivering our HR self-service application by providing the critical middleware link between legacy-based data and our Intranet presentation server," states Chris Crater, Systems Development Manager for R.J. Reynolds. "The system facilitates point-and-click user access to a host of benefit-related information."

Results: Create More Efficient Human Resources Operations, While Leveraging Investment in Existing Mainframe Applications

Additionally, the implementation offered numerous other benefits to R.J. Reynolds. For example, allowing the company to re-leverage investments in existing mainframe applications proved to be very cost effective. Also, because of the tool's ease-of-use and intuitive nature, R.J. Reynolds incurred minimal software training and services costs.

Because of the project, R.J. Reynolds was able to eliminate a costly, externally-supplied Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system for handling annual benefit enrollments. Finally, employees are able to directly and privately obtain a wide range of benefit-related information and records online, which offers employees a convenience, and at the same time, enhances efficiency for the HR function.

Sums up Crater, "ClientBuilder's ease-of-use enabled us to develop the HR Direct Application in a very short period of time. Going forward, we expect that perhaps just 10% of our development time will be spent on working with ClientBuilder. This means that programmers will be able to focus the lion's share of their efforts in areas of expertise and quickly respond to evolving business needs."

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