



Client

perceptivesoftware

Challenges

Expand its market

Solution

Progress® DataDirect® for ODBC

Benefit

Increased its solutions' supported platforms, making them attractive to a much wider market; dramatically reduced development time-to-market and deployment time

Roadblock to Sales

Prior to 2005, Perceptive Software, Inc., found itself in a frustrating position. The software company knew it had a winning product—ImageNow—and a very wide market for the type of document and workflow management provided by the various ImageNow-based solutions they offered. But sales encountered roadblocks due to the prospective customer's varying IT environments and their requirements for applications to run on a specific vendor's database.

"People would tell us that they really liked our product," recalls Jesse Armstrong, Senior Product Manager at Perceptive Software. "But they'd have a corporate mandate that they could only use, say, Oracle as their backend. Since our product used only its own embedded database, we'd have to tell them that we would not be able to assist them in their solution."

This didn't sit well for a number of reasons. Most important, of course, was the loss of potential sales opportunities. But in addition, one major selling point for Perceptive Software is its ability to integrate with existing software solutions and to leverage its customers' existing technology investments.

"We integrate with every accounting system out there," says Armstrong. "You can click a button in your accounting system and view all the paperwork scanned into ImageNow."

A Great Diversity of Users and Platforms

With an ability to scale for customers having anywhere from 5 to 5,000+ users, Perceptive Software's innovative solutions are used by organizations in a broad range of industries worldwide. Accounting departments in any type of businesses use it to manage the entire invoice approval process, routing scanned-in invoices according to a company-defined workflow. Financial services and higher education organizations use it for scanning students' applications for financial aid, tax returns, transcripts, claim forms, and more. Healthcare organizations use it for filing scanned-in admissions documents and sharing patient information with insurance companies and other healthcare providers.

Major users of ImageNow solutions are as far ranging as Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, CareerBuilder.com, CitiGroup, Home Shopping Network, and federal, state and local government organizations, as well as hundreds of major healthcare providers and universities. As can be imagined, such diversity of users involves a multitude of different IT platform preferences and standards.

"Our application layer has always supported multiple platforms," says Armstrong. "We have this little grid that shows the versions of operating systems we support for the application server; we were determined to include databases in that grid and to have a check in every one of them. Our goal was to never lose a sale because we couldn't support someone's database platform."

How Will We Ever Do It?

At first the development team at Perceptive Software considered writing natively to every database, using the client software for Oracle, SQL Server, DB2, and so on. But that approach would have resulted in a very long and drawn out time to market. And then there was the support of different database versions to consider.

"One of our biggest concerns was how we would support all that," Armstrong recalls. "Every time a customer would go out and download the latest version of, let's say, the DB2 driver, we'd run the risk of something not working. At the time, we only had about 45 employees. So as soon as we heard about a product like Progress® DataDirect® for ODBC that other option quickly lost appeal."

Armstrong says that embedding Progress DataDirect for ODBC drivers into the ImageNow product offered a threefold benefit:

- Complete and up-to-date support for multiple database back ends.
- Ease of deployment. "To install an Oracle client, for example, is quite tedious," says Armstrong. "To install Progress DataDirect drivers takes us a matter of seconds. It dramatically cuts back on the time that our professional service team spends on onsite deployment."
- Excellent support. "The product's been stable enough that we haven't really needed to call Progress DataDirect support much," Armstrong says. "But when we have, it's been just superb."

The Results: Supporting Growth

By embedding Progress DataDirect for ODBC drivers in the ImageNow software, Perceptive Software was able to add support for SQL Server, Oracle, and DB2 all in one shot, shaving many months off the product's time to market. Armstrong reports that the entire process, including rebranding the drivers, took about six months total.

"We like that we sell the Progress DataDirect technology as just part of our software," Armstrong says. "Even many members of our internal support and deployment staff don't know that we don't write those drivers. And our sales staff loves that they can silence that one techie in every sales situation who always says 'You won't support this,' with 'Yes, we do.'"

In the three and a half years or so since that time, Perceptive Software has grown from 45 to 450 employees, and its revenue has also increased tenfold.

"As you can imagine, growing that fast and supporting that many customers are a tremendous challenge," says Armstrong. "But even with bringing in all those new customers, we haven't had any database-related issues in that time."

"Our product's acceptance in the industry has been phenomenal."

Jesse Armstrong,
Senior Product Manager, Perceptive Software, Inc.

While Armstrong attributes this galloping growth to a combination of several initiatives within the company, he credits Progress DataDirect with having had a considerable role in it.

"Without question, the cross-platform capabilities and ease of support have contributed to Perceptive Software's success," he concludes. "Our product's acceptance in the industry has been phenomenal."

About Progress

Progress (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global leader in application development, empowering the digital transformation organizations need to create and sustain engaging user experiences in today's evolving marketplace. With offerings spanning web, mobile and data for on-premises and cloud environments, Progress powers startups and industry titans worldwide, promoting success one customer at a time. Learn about Progress at www.progress.com or 1-781-280-4000.

Worldwide Headquarters

Progress, 14 Oak Park, Bedford, MA 01730 USA Tel: +1 781 280-4000 Fax: +1 781 280-4095

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