Client

STERLAND Building Solutions

Challenge
Character-based legacy ERP system limited company's ability to meet growing customer expectations for anywhere, anytime access and expand internationally

Solution
Worked with Progress Services to modernize existing OpenEdge-based application into a cloud-based modular system with a state-of-the art graphical user interface (GUI) and support for mobile devices

Benefit
Significantly increased competitive advantage, accelerated time to market, increased customer productivity by 40-50 percent, expects to reduce maintenance costs by 50 percent

Modernization Accelerates Time-to-Market and Provides Competitive Advantage

For more than two decades, Sterland Computing has delivered leading Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions and services to timber, plumbing and building supplies organizations throughout Australia and New Zealand. With a mission to empower its customers to improve profitability and productivity, Sterland has continued to evolve its solutions and invest in new technologies to keep pace with the needs and expectations of the market.

Most recently, Sterland completed an ambitious and aggressive modernization project of its existing ProStix ERP system, which has since been rebranded as "Frameworks." Based on the Progress® OpenEdge® application development platform, ProStix is a powerful, feature-rich application that enables companies to run their entire business from a single application. Developed to meet the unique needs of its target industries, ProStix has a devoted base of 4,700 users across 500 sites and 100 organizations.

"ProStix Enterprise enabled Vinod Patel to gain vast improvements in business efficiency and gain immediate access to accurate real-time information across the branch network," said Atin Patel, CIO of Vinod Patel & Co Ltd. Based in the Fiji Islands, the company employs over 700 staff and offers more than 30,000 items in hardware, building material, tools, plumbing and more.

With invaluable underlying business logic based on 20 years of experience and development, ProStix has continued to offer customers like Vinod Patel & Co Ltd the most powerful application from a functionality perspective. However, with the rapid adoption of web-based and mobile technologies, ProStix's on-premise architecture and character-based GUI offered a limited user experience.

"ProStix has always been superior to the competition when it comes to functionality. But to satisfy the market's desire for anytime, anywhere access, increase our competitive advantage and grow our business internationally, we wanted to transform ProStix into a cloud-based system with a state-of-the-art graphical user interface," said Greg Thomas, CEO of Sterland Computing Pty Ltd.

Embracing a Best Practice Methodology for Modernization

A Progress application partner for more than 20 years, Sterland turned to Progress Services to support and accelerate the project. "Progress has been our longest-lasting and most strategic business partner, so we decided to gradually modernize ProStix using OpenEdge and a best practices methodology developed by Progress," said Thomas. "We wanted to be able to offer cloud-based services, and we worked with Progress to develop a phased migration strategy so we could get results quickly without waiting years before the application was rewritten."

"A rich and intuitive user interface clearly helped users come up to speed quickly, and I would guesstimate these customers are receiving a 40- to 50-percent improvement in productivity from our new Progress OpenEdge-based Frameworks system."

Mark Evans,
Development Manager, Sterland Computing Pty Ltd

By using the Progress Fluid Application Transformation methodology, Sterland's developers have been able to make application changes faster, at lower cost and without fear of breaking the application or the development budget. The methodology has given the company a foundation for agile growth by enabling it to shift to componentized application logic and a layered architecture. As a result, Sterland's developers have been able to modernize ProStix on a module-by-module basis, leveraging existing business logic to accelerate development and deploying the new modules to existing customers as they are completed.

The User Experience (UX) expertise provided by Progress Services was invaluable when it came to developing the new user interface (UI). "Rather than providing our users with every single piece of information possible, we have focused our new Frameworks UI on what the user actually needs to support how they work in order to make them as efficient and productive as possible," said Thomas.

Sterland is now able to customize interfaces for different types of devices. Thomas explained, "The Fluid Modernization tools from Progress allow us to pick a device and then the fields and screen elements we want the user to see on that device type. We have started doing this for iPads, so now when a user logs in to Frameworks, they may see the top ten things they need versus the 100 that would be available through the Enterprise version of the app. We expect to develop more interfaces for different mobile devices in the near future."

Chris Johnston, Product Manager for Sterland, estimates that using the Progress methodology has delivered a 100-percent faster time to market than if the company had completely redeveloped the logic of the ProStix application using another software environment. He also expects to reduce maintenance time by 50 percent once greater logic reuse begins. "Being able to run an API call directly to the business logic allows for easier testing and automated build testing to further improve maintenance," he said.

Another benefit of the new architecture is the ability for Sterland to integrate automated testing processes, which historically it couldn't do in a character environment. "This modernization project will improve our maintainability and productivity long term, and eventually reduce our costs. We have already been able to move two full time employees (FTEs) out of our support group and transition them into more consultative, revenue-generating areas," said Thomas.

Sterland has completed the migration of the enquiry functions, financials (General Ledger, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable), sales functions (Point of Sale and Sales Order Processing for trade customers) and expects to complete the migration of its Inventory functions within the next month. Once the modernization is complete, Thomas estimates a 40- to 50-percent improvement in terms of new feature deliveries. "The modernization efforts will increase our addressable market by an immeasurable factor both geographically and vertically as we more actively compete with advanced cloud-based offerings."

Edging Out the Competition with Frameworks

While Sterland has been releasing the new modules to its existing customer base for a few months, it has only been within the last month that the company has gone to market with the new Frameworks application. "We now have 25 percent of our customer base migrated to the available components of Frameworks, and we have already closed three new deals," said Thomas, who added customer reaction to the new application has been tremendous.

Goulburn Produce & Rural Supplies, a one-stop building, hardware and rural supply store located in New South Wales, recently migrated to Frameworks and has already realized significant benefits. "We've been successfully using ProStix for years to run our rural, timber and hardware supplies business. Recently Sterland upgraded us to their new OpenEdge based Frameworks application that takes all the great business know-how from ProStix and adds a powerful, intuitive, multi-tasking web front end," said Greg

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>
> Jean-Marc Blanchette
> Vice President, Bluebee Software

Tyson, Systems Administrator for Goulburn Produce & Rural Supplies. "It's GREAT; so now, not only do I have the business application I need, but also a system that is easy to learn and productive for my uses...and I can use it on my iPad. It's a brilliant package that will take care of my business needs for years to come."

According to Mark Evans, Development Manager for Sterland, customers are getting productivity gains from things such as the clearer presentation of data, the drill-through capabilities and being able to have multiple tabs open with multiple instances of a given routine. "A rich and intuitive user interface clearly helped people come up to speed quickly, and I would guesstimate they are receiving a 40- to 50-percent improvement in productivity from our new Progress OpenEdge-based Frameworks system."

The modernized Frameworks application has given Sterland a significant competitive edge in the market. Building approvals are down in Australia and New Zealand, and the market for ERP applications targeted toward the building community has become highly competitive. Presenting a more modernized application to prospects and customers while showing a product roadmap that embraces emerging technology will help the company capture new customers while making sure it protects its revenue streams.

"None of our competitors can offer what we can with Frameworks: a leading-edge, cloud-based ERP solution that is tailored to meet the unique needs of our target industries and offers true multi-site support. In fact, the last two deals we

signed were won against a competitor that we haven't been able to beat in eight years. That alone speaks volumes to our strengthened position in this market," said Thomas.

The new modular architecture is enabling Sterland to be far more innovative–reacting faster to market and customer requirements. "Our ability to deliver new features and functionality to market has increased dramatically because we don't have to reinvent the wheel for every project," said Thomas. "For example, when we needed to respond to some unique UI requirements for one of our customers, we were able to leverage 50 percent of the existing business logic of another module, which significantly accelerated the process. This architecture is also ensuring better security because we are using existing modules that already have closed integrity."

A Future with Progress

Sterland continues to bet its business on Progress because OpenEdge continues to deliver the performance it needs to be competitive. "OpenEdge has always been a stable, solid and reliable platform, which is critical to our success," said Thomas. "With our new Cloud-based application, we are poised to grow our business internationally – something we expect to do within 12 months."

Thomas said Sterland is excited to leverage additional Progress technologies, such as Progress® Rollbase®, to rapidly deliver state-of-the-art applications to the market.

The company also plans to conduct a POC using Kendo UI® by Progress, an HTML5, jQuery-based framework for building modern web apps.

"We want to use Progress solutions to help us increase the number of apps we take to market," he said. "Quickly developing smaller apps will give us a way to get our foot in the door with new customers, demonstrate our technical skills and knowledge of the industry, and then provide us with the opportunity to sell our larger ERP application." The Progress Rollbase platform for rapid application development in the cloud will also play a key role in this new application development strategy.

"We will continue to invest in technology to be a strong and innovative company," said Thomas. "We are excited about the new tools Progress is bringing to market and how they can help us deliver competitive applications that enable our customers to increase productivity, maximize their operations and ultimately grow their business."

About Sterland Computing Pty Ltd

Sterland Computing works with the timber, plumbing and building supplies industries in Australia and New Zealand to help them improve productivity, create cost efficiencies and grow their business so they can reach their full potential. Sterland's fully integrated business management software solution allows customers to run their full operation from a single enterprise application. Sterland's software solutions are chosen by over 500 sites throughout Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, and it's the only solution developed by the industry, for the industry.

Visit www.sterland.com.au for more information.

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-premise 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.

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