

POWER & TELEPHONE SUPPLY COMPANY STAYS AGILE WITH INFOR AND PROGRESS

Client



Progress Partner



Challenge

Infor builds business applications with last-mile functionality and scientific insights for select industries including wholesale distribution. The Progress® OpenEdge® platform powers a number of Infor's core products, and has done so for more than 20 years. "Our customers look to us as a source of technology and innovation, so they can manage competitive pressures despite typically low margins," said Eric Ryerson, Senior Director of Development at Infor. "Progress OpenEdge is a full business development platform with an integrated, reliable transaction database, combined with a business language that can be used to develop applications. It's enabled us to stay modern and provide a higher level of innovation for our customers."

The main challenge distributors face is operating on small margins while delivering exceptional service and trying to innovate to stay competitive. "Everyone expects that there's an app to solve a given problem, and that expectation creates a tremendous amount of stress and pressure on an ERP system provider," said Ryerson. "The need to extend, enhance and provide the last mile of service—that last mile of functionality for a distributor to their customer—is a necessity for supporting customer growth."

One Infor customer facing these challenges is Power & Telephone Supply Company (Power & Tel), a premier wholesale distributor to the global communications marketplace. Its biggest challenge, according to Dennis Dominioni, Vice President of IT and Quality for Power & Tel, is trying to stay current and get ahead in an extremely competitive marketplace, without making the platforms already deployed and enjoyed by its thousands of customers and vendors obsolete.

“We are in a unique business situation,” said Dominioni. “We still have the traditional pick, pack and ship distribution model in place; however, our customers now have additional requirements once our products are delivered, throughout the lifecycle of those assets in their organization. Now, we must continue to provide new tools that extend from our ERP into the field, and frankly, into the hands of our customers.”

Solution

To solve this challenge, Power & Tel is using Infor Distribution SX.e, an OpenEdge-based ERP solution. According to Dominioni, many differentiators make Infor SX.e stand out: it’s a solution designed for the distribution industry that actually runs in the Progress environment. “We can’t afford to write an ERP, and we don’t want to be handcuffed by the ERP we choose,” he said. “The combination of Progress OpenEdge and Infor SX.e has enabled us to extend our core ERP system and maintain process integrity throughout the supply chain. Once the product we distribute is out the door, we can maintain visibility and control. It enables us to provide a hybrid environment for our customers, as well, which is unique in our industry.”

Ryerson said using OpenEdge to expose web services that run the business logic makes them available for distributors such as Power & Tel, who choose to extend their applications. “It turns the ERP into an engine

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Eric Ryerson, Senior Director of Development,
Infor

that can be leveraged, extended, personalized and enhanced, without having to actually modify the code—and it becomes a very powerful tool for an innovative distributor,” he said.

“We use the Infor solution for nearly every transaction that occurs in our organization,” said Power & Tel’s Dominioni, who added that they average about a billion database-level transactions per week across multiple companies, in different languages and currencies, as well as all customer-facing documents.

Results

Performance and scalability are essential to customers using Infor SX.e, and OpenEdge delivers on this expectation. “Because OpenEdge is a native online transaction processing engine, as opposed to a simple document or storage engine, it performs incredibly well and is very scalable,” said Ryerson. “That scalability and cost-effective performance are must-haves for our customers.”

Productivity among Ryerson’s team has increased, as well. “I think we probably gain close to 20-percent efficiency and productivity gains by using the Progress OpenEdge stack,” he said. “The Application Business Logic is closely tied into the database layer, and we get the web services basically for free, because we generate them automatically. Without OpenEdge, we would have to develop each one of those tiers, so it’s much faster the way we’re doing it now.”

Additionally, Ryerson said OpenEdge helps Infor reduce costs by providing a stable environment that runs with minimal administration. “Progress OpenEdge enables us to keep total cost of ownership down with a reliable application that requires minimal overhead and supervision,” he said.

OpenEdge adds value for Infor’s customers, as well. According to Power & Tel’s Dominioni, “Our distributors, as well as a lot of our customers and vendors, often talk about the overhead imposed from an IT perspective, from the platforms they’re using,” he said. “They simply cannot believe we operate so efficiently. From a total cost of ownership, we are very satisfied, and I think we’re at about the best price value point we could possibly reach.”

Dominioni added the reliability and availability of Infor’s OpenEdge-based platform provides the essentials to enable business continuity for customers. Their customers depend on Power & Tel’s software platforms and their availability throughout the entire transaction. “The Infor SX.e architecture lends itself to a replicated environment, which enables us to guarantee our customers have access to their data,” he said. “We’ve

been using Progress OpenEdge and Infor since 1998, and so far we haven’t lost a single byte of data. We absolutely know it’s a sound, solid solution, and we take a lot of comfort in that.”

In this volatile market, Infor SX.e based on OpenEdge has enabled Power & Tel to keep up with changing market requirements and remain agile and responsive. “Our customer base is changing and the revenue per customer continues to decrease as technology is commoditized, so we must operate with smaller margins and, at the same time, serve a greater variety of customers,” said Dominioni. “We have to move faster while ensuring the quality of the consumer experience. So far, between Infor and Progress, we’ve been able to keep up, and we’re very proud of that.”

Ryerson said OpenEdge enables Infor to keep its platform up to date with the latest technologies and capabilities. “I’ve been impressed and grateful that Progress is providing the tools for us to stay current, because if they weren’t, we’d have to find another way,” he said. “But the reality is they’re making it very easy.”

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