D-REIZEN

DIFFERENTIATION THROUGH INDEPENDENCE

Travelers love discovering a great deal for a special trip, especially when they can be certain that they've found the best possible value. Want to stay in a trendy boutique hotel in Dublin for just €43 a night? Check D-reizen first! D-reizen is Holland's largest independent holiday retailer. The firm, which operates 180 retail locations, as well as online properties and call centers, has built the trust of a loyal traveling public by remaining independent from tour operators. As a result, D-reizen customers can compare travel deals from multiple operators and figure out how to get the best price and terms. For example, more than one tour operator might offer a three day cruise to Majorca. However, each operator might have a different price for the same trip. Using D-reizen, the customer can figure out the option that works best.

STRUGGLING TO REMAIN FLEXIBLE

D-reizen faced a challenge in trying to remain on top of the latest and most exciting holiday deals. Finding and showcasing the travel specials was not particularly difficult. However, when it came to ensuring payments were processed in ways that satisfied both the tour operators and regulators, the company had a struggle with its existing system architecture. In Holland, it is customary for a tour operator to require a down payment for a holiday and then collect the full payment within six weeks of the trip. For each type of holiday (cruises, cycle, sport, camping, etc.), slightly different policies have to be applied for the downpayment. These policies are enforced by the trade organization, ANVR. In addition, D-reizen was lacking the flexibility in their IT systems to support certain types of commercial campaigns. For example, when a credit card cost was not calculated during the campaign, D-reizen needed to be able to keep up with changes in payment rules as well as regularly add new trips to its system.

The problem was that each payment rule modification necessitated a change in the company's core, home-grown system code as well as an update to the Website. A new rule begot a develop/test/accept/deploy cycle. It was effectively a new release for every rule change, which occurred at least monthly. The process took about five days. It was a resource intensive process that hurt D-reizen's ability to be flexible and quick with promotion of new travel deals.

CHALLENGE

Need for new levels of speed and flexibility in changing website payment rules to stay competitive in the travel market.

SOLUTION

Business Rules Management Software separating rules from code and enabling non-technical business managers to modify rules without having to recode back end applications or the Website

BENEFIT

Reduced time-to-market for new payment rules days from 5 days to a few hours.

The rule management process was also cumbersome, a frustrating situation that involved IT in multiple discussions with business managers. "Every time IT sat with business, the whole solution, the whole decision table would change," said Lucas Nijenhuis, Functional Architect at D-reizen. Mr. Nijenhuis, who has been with D-reizen for 11 years, realized that the company needed a simple way to empower business managers to change payment rules without necessitating a series of unproductive meeting with IT, a coding cycle, and a re-release of the core business application and Website.

SELECTING A BUSINESS RULES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

To provide the agility D-reizen required, Nijenhuis and his team realized that they needed a powerful and flexible business rules management system. After an extensive market evaluation, they selected Progress Corticon. "It was clear in our evaluation that Corticon was the easiest to learn and use, and would deliver the fastest time to market," said Lucas Nijenhuis.

SEPARATING RULES FROM CODING

Progress Corticon has given D-reizen the ability to separate the process of making or changing payment rules from the .NET code and Oracle database that power the company's applications and Website. Corticon has a separate studio that is set up apart from the software development environment. Business people can now change payment rules without having to involve a programmer. The new rule can be implemented right into the production environment without the previously required release cycle. Rules can be tested without affecting the whole site. However, though release testing is not required, Corticon does give the D-reizen team the ability to test new rules before deploying them. For example, they can test a payment rule with expected payment values and ensure that the rule is functioning correctly before launching it. In addition, Corticon can automatically test a new rule against hundreds of old rules to make sure that there are no conflicts or errors arising from the new rule.

NO LONGER RULED BY RULES

The new Corticon-based approach to payment rules is benefiting D-reizen in several ways. "The Progress business rules management software makes everything significantly faster. A rule change that used to take five days to code and implement can now be completed in a few hours," said Lucas Nijenhuis

Having business people be able to implement rules changes rapidly makes it possible to keep the D-reizen site fresh and competitive with the latest great travel deals. There is no longer any worry about falling behind in posting new travel offers because of friction around payment rules. Payment rules can ease the customer experience as well, making new options available in user-friendly ways.

BUILDING ON A ROCK SOLID FOUNDATION

The current Corticon instance is operating at a modest scale on an Apache Tomcat that sits on a Linux server. An example of a typical Corticon transaction for D-reizen might involve recalculating the cash payment for a trip versus a credit card option. "We've been running the Progress Business Rules Management Software for four years now and never had a problem," he said. "It's extremely stable."

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Lucas Nijenhuis
Functional Architect
D-reizen

PROGRESS

D-reizen envisions many new use cases for Corticon. Indeed, Nijenhuis expects to be running as many as 20,000 transactions per hour on the system in the near future. Corticon is also set to be used for simplifying the online "payment slip" that confirms a booking and making it more dynamic. The payment slip might need to contain certain language or disclaimers that are unique to each trip. (e.g. Traveler needs to get a vaccine or visa prior to departing, and so forth.) With Corticon, these kinds of dynamic rule changes can be made rapidly. Nijenhuis is confident that Corticon can scale across many use cases and continue to deliver the performance, reliability and flexibility that D-reizen requires.

✳ PROGRESS