



GAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE BY MODERNIZING ITS PROGRESS® OPENEDGE® APPLICATION

The challenges posed by recent economic volatility have motivated customers to seek new, cost-effective ways to run their business. As they explore new options, application providers are looking for innovative ways to adapt their offerings to meet this change and maintain a competitive advantage.

A Progress Application Partner for over 20 years, Vermont Systems, Inc., [VSI] specializes in developing software products for managing recreation and parks operations for municipal, county, state and federal military governmental entities, as well as private businesses with similar needs. For 25 years, Vermont Systems, Inc., [VSI] has maintained its market leadership by continuously evolving the application underlying its RecTrac suite of products to meet changing industry needs.

To maintain its competitive edge within this niche market and to continue providing customers with the best solution to fit their requirements, VSI recently initiated a three-phased strategy focused on transforming its client-based product into a SaaS solution.

“We have seen a shift in the industry, with more customers looking to adopt a Web-based solution,” explains Giles Willey, President of VSI. “Many customers within the industry have multiple sites, with the recreation department based at city hall plus ancillary sites like five pools, thirteen parks, etc.—some of which are only open a few months a year. For them, investing in big infrastructure costs isn’t practical. Also, as IT groups have been downsized, some of the smaller departments can no longer afford an on-premise solution. Consequently, we have found ourselves disadvantaged at times, missing opportunities with smaller organizations. Unlike some of competitors, we see significant potential in also serving the smaller markets.”

VSI engaged Progress Professional Services as both a mentor and collaborator as it embarked on its transformation project 18 months ago. “We never considered any option other than Progress,” says Willey. “Why reinvest in something else when we are perfectly satisfied with what we have? The cost is affordable for our customers; Progress continues to provide reliable, low maintenance and robust technology;



CHALLENGE

Meet market demand for a Web-based solution

SOLUTION

Transformed its client-based product into a SaaS solution, leveraging its 23-year investment and expertise in Progress® OpenEdge® technology

BENEFITS

- ▶ *Strengthened its competitive edge with both on-premise and SaaS offerings*
- ▶ *Poised to take advantage of sales opportunities in the small- to mid-market*
- ▶ *Enabled customers to manage operations proactively with access to comprehensive, real-time information*
- ▶ *Increased development efficiency*

and we've never had any significant issues. That is an amazing track record for a 23-year relationship."

TAKING A PHASED APPROACH TO TRANSFORMATION

VSI organized its transformation project into three phases. The first phase has focused on transferring code from the existing fat client architecture to the new Web client architecture, which will be available to VSI's customers at the end of the year. Progress provided mentoring services as well as a "framework" that allowed VSI to harvest much of its code and modernize the internals of its application for the future. "We would not have been successful had we not engaged Progress Professional Services. This project was far too complex and important," explains Willey.

During phase one, VSI spent six weeks exploring various scenarios with Progress before a single line of code was written. "What did we want to accomplish? How can we get there? These questions and discussions were instrumental to the success of our project. And the knowledge transfer we received from Progress was invaluable," says Willey. "It was certainly money very well spent and an excellent learning process—not just for this transformation, but for future such projects."

Phase two will focus on determining how existing programs can run more efficiently. "In phase one, we found code that was less than optimal. For example, in one case we were making a call to a particular table 1,700 times before we actually showed anything on the screen. With a fat pipe it wasn't an issue, but we don't have that same luxury with the Internet. We have already gained a new strategy in regards to how we write code, which has significantly increased the efficiency of our development organization. We are committed to taking off every millisecond that we can. So in 2011 we will be focusing on how we can enhance system performance."

Phase three of VSI's transformation initiative will focus on divorcing the business logic from every single program to make the system completely UI-agnostic. "Within approximately one year to 15 months we will focus on transforming the UI, by possibly using .NET or a part .NET/part Web browser. We purposely haven't planned that phase in detail because, undoubtedly, more tools will be available that we may want to take advantage of down the road."

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Giles Willey
President
VSI

EXPANDING ITS OFFERING "EXPONENTIALLY"

VSI has given some customers a preview of RecTrac's new hosted features and those to come over the next year, and Willey says response has been tremendous. "They are truly excited about these developments. I really see this as expanding our offering exponentially."

The Web-hosted version of RecTrac will dramatically change the way customers are able to manage their day-to-day business. "Access to real-time information is a benefit that will apply to every single one of our customers. They will now have the information they need to proactively monitor their offerings rather than reacting to reports when it is too late to make any impactful changes."

The transformation project has also strengthened the company's competitive edge, providing the ability to offer prospects in all markets the best solution—on-premise or hosted—to meet their needs. As a result, VSI's competitors can no longer leverage VSI's lack of a Web-based solution as an advantage or point of contention with prospects.

VSI is already hosting Web servers for eight customers, and it expects to close a hosting deal in the near future with a large military customer. Willey says the transformation process has been extremely positive and worthwhile. "Never having done a joint project; I didn't know what to expect. But working with Progress we have produced an extraordinarily good project that has delivered far beyond my expectations."

ABOUT VERMONT SYSTEMS



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PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation [NASDAQ: PRGS] is a global software company that simplifies the development, deployment and management of business applications on-premise or in the cloud, on any platform or device, to any data source, with enhanced performance, minimal IT complexity and low total cost of ownership.

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