

Success WITH CA

Advantage™

Client Info AT A GLANCE

Company Name:
DIS Corporation

Industry:
Software Development
and Services

Geographic Location:
North America

CA Solutions Used:
COOL:Plex and
Websylian software patterns

Biggest ROI:
Increased application
development productivity
and customer satisfaction

Dealer Information Systems Cuts Application Development Costs and Launches eBusinesses Using COOL:Plex®

Dealer Information Systems (DIS) supplies software systems and services to 2,500 agricultural and construction equipment dealers across North America. The company has 125 employees with three locations in the U.S.

DIS develops software with COOL:Plex (now known as Advantage™ Plex for Distributed



Systems) for the IBM 5250, UNIX and Microsoft Windows platforms. COOL:Plex is CA's model-based application development tool which generates 100% of the native code from the developer's design. DIS software systems support seven different OS versions in total, running on roughly 8000 AS/400 and 400 UNIX machines. Approximately 12,000 people use DIS software in the workplace every day.

eBusiness and Platform Issues

With a diverse customer base, varying degrees of computing technology in place, and an urgent need to launch eBusiness for each customer, DIS faced a sophisticated set of challenges. "One of our major business strategies is to bring platforms, eBusiness and product offerings together so that we can develop once and then give everyone the same level of service and functionality," said DIS Vice President of Development, Robin Halliday. "With COOL:Plex, we can simultaneously generate software products for different platform environments while also launching eBusiness initiatives."

Since DIS customers are extremely price sensitive and not technology oriented, their applications have to utilize existing hardware and OS platforms, be easy to use and flexible enough to meet customer needs. Virtually every customer implementation requires customization for specific functionality and preference. These customizations

are actually built right into DIS projects as "options." The right solution had to provide cross-platform development capability and simple, efficient tools for their developers. It also had to provide an easy way to integrate and deploy eBusiness applications. "We were looking to bring these applications together in order to support a single business system application on multiple platforms," said John Gaven, DIS's Software Product Architect. "Ultimately, we want to eliminate the platform issue entirely by serving applications as an application service provider (ASP). And we are just beginning to do that with several customers."

One Tool Easily Solves All the Issues

COOL:Plex allows DIS to easily and quickly develop applications for all its customers' platforms and deliver web-based eBusiness solutions using the same code. It helps them maintain and extend their original RPG-based applications and quickly create new programs as needs arise. The cost and time saving are obvious.

DIS customers can now connect to business partners with the same interfaces they were using before. They also have control over what they present to their supply-chain partners and end-customers via a simple web interface that runs on their green-screen equipment. "For instance," said Halliday, "COOL:Plex allows us to easily build applications so they can sell parts through an eCommerce portal."

"With COOL:Plex and Websylian, we've developed a plug-in application on our existing business system, allowing the dealer to basically produce a website all via an AS/400 5250 dumb-terminal screen," she continued. Soft Design, a CA partner, specifically created Websylian, a software tool that helps integrate eBusiness applications, to be used in conjunction with COOL:Plex.



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”

John Gaven,
Software Product Architect,
DIS

DIS provides web templates for all kinds of customer eBusiness applications. If customers want to market used equipment on their sites, for example, the COOL:Plex Web application allows them to select the inventory they want posted, and Websyidian generates the HTML pages automatically.

More and more DIS customers are using the website generation application, termed “DISnet.” The dealers use it to increase equipment sales and rentals while building stronger relationships with their customers. DIS also offers the dealers web-based contact management and unit inventory applications. “Our customers love it,” said Halliday. “They get all this functionality without having to upgrade or overhaul their systems.” In addition to providing eBusiness solutions, COOL:Plex allows DIS to keep developing and improving standard applications for the dealerships’ internal operations.

Big-Time Benefits and Unwavering Customer Loyalty

By using COOL:Plex, DIS enjoys improvements in productivity, low staffing overhead, reduced application maintenance costs and higher quality, less error-prone code. “We build applications in a quarter or half the time it would take using traditional methods,” said Gaven. “And, we can support a thousand dealers with just a handful of people. If we were building custom websites, we would not be able to create, maintain and update a thousand sites with just a few people.” Of their 125 employees, 15 are software developers.

Gaven estimated that maintaining applications with COOL:Plex takes 10% to 15% of the effort required to maintain its original 5250 applications. The code generated by COOL:Plex is high quality with error rates that

are almost negligible. Since the company no longer has to deal with complex code and maintenance, DIS can turn its attention to more pressing needs like network simplification and continued application improvements.

“COOL:Plex has allowed us to focus our attention on the application rather than the technology,” said Gaven. “Since using COOL:Plex, we don’t spend a whole lot of time keeping up with technology. CA keeps up with language technologies while we focus on business solutions and customer requests.”

Ultimately, the level of service that DIS can provide is tremendous. IT has become indispensable to its customers by delivering software for everything from receivables, payables, payroll, general ledger and financial reporting to insurance, inventory control, service management, rental management and eBusiness. DIS software provides true supply chain integration with eCommerce, manufacturer procurement and end-to-end integration for ordering, warranty claims, financial reporting and service.

Developers Pick up COOL:Plex Quickly

COOL:Plex implementation and developer training was quick and simple for DIS. The company has trained three quarters of its development staff and plans to bring the rest of its developers up to speed within the year. “We originally attended some CA training seminars,” said Halliday. “And we go to CA WorldSM to brush up on new features — but the programmers find the product really easy to use.” DIS’s local community college has been approved as a Computer Associates University, so they intend to use that as a future resource when hiring new programmers.

For more information, call 1-800-225-5224 or visit ca.com



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