

Success: Watkins Technology Group

Profile

Watkins Technology Group (WTG), a consulting company located in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, specializes in custom business applications for retail, transportation, and other industries. WTG's relies on power tools, like Visible Developer, to compete against much larger IT services companies.

Problem

A retail company with over 300 franchises in the United States selected WTG to develop a custom point-of-sale (POS) system. WTG evaluated three options for the retailer: (1) enhance existing applications that performed overlapping POS functions, (2) purchase a commercial POS application, or (3) build a custom application. The decision to build a custom POS application was made because:

Enhancing legacy applications to meet new requirements is a high-risk and difficult task.

Even if the legacy applications were enhanced, the design and technology would not be suitable for the retailer's business vision, which included international franchises and selling over the Internet.

Commercial POS applications did not fit the retailer's business model, and compromising requirements would reduce the client's competitive advantage. The future business environment required a POS that worked in retail situations ranging from a single-user store to a store with networked sales stations and even a "virtual" store operating on the Internet. And there was one last and challenging requirement: WTG's three-person development staff had to launch the pilot version in six months!

Solution

Glenn Watkins, president of WTG, recognized the need for a scalable three-tier architecture that could meet current business needs and easily expand to support future growth. Mr. Watkins explained: "The business information and processing rules do not change, just the application deployment (single-user, multi-user, e-business) and the user interface (traditional graphical UI, web browser, and batch processing). The three-tier Visual Basic business objects generated by Visible Developer were a perfect fit. We could develop once and

reuse the business logic in different configurations without changing a single line of code."

Visible Developer's model-based approach was also a key factor in WTG's success. The code patterns generated the application framework, allowing Glenn and his team to focus on the business rules - which is exactly what the client wanted. Visible Developer took care of the technical details and intricacies of three-tier, distributed applications.

In the pilot POS project, 98% of the business and database logic code was generated by Visible Developer. The remaining 2% represents the custom business rules specified in the model and then implemented in the generated code. The explicit representation of business rules in the Visible Developer model has another valuable benefit. Mr. Watkin's said: "The pilot POS application is a 'living specification.' The model provides a clear, unambiguous definition of what we have built, and the code patterns ensure that the generated code matches the model."

Benefits

The pilot POS application is now running in six stores, and plans are underway for a second phase of development that will add ERP functions. Visible Developer made it possible for a three-person development team to deliver a robust, distributed POS application on a tight schedule. The WTG team focused on the business needs of the customer and relied on Visible Developer's code patterns to take care of the technical details.