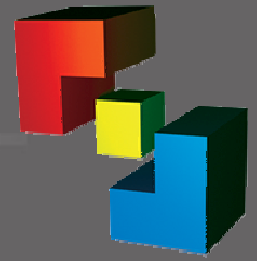


Case Study

Charming Shoppes, Inc.



Microsoft .NET Code Migration

Award-winning Microsoft Gold Certified Partner **The Henson Group, Inc. (THG)** managed a major code migration for women's apparel retailer Charming Shoppes, Inc., that addressed shortcomings of the incumbent legacy code and facilitated growth and expansion moving forward.



CHARMING SHOPPES, INC.

Project Vitals

Industry: Women's Retail

Customer Profile: Charming Shoppes is a leading specialty apparel retailer primarily focused on plus-size women's apparel through three distinct brands: Lane Bryant, Fashion Bug, and Catherines Plus Sizes.

Business Situation: Charming Shoppes has e-commerce applications that consist of three main external web sites that support the online operations of each of its clothing brands. These three e-commerce applications were based on incumbent code that met the initial demands of the business, but inevitably presented significant shortcomings as the company grew.

Solution: To resolve the issues this company was experiencing with the legacy code its e-commerce applications were based upon, THG designed a tiered solution for the using .NET (VB.NET, ADO.NET, ASP.NET).

Results: The Henson Group achieved all of Charming Shoppes' objectives for enhancing the functionality of its three e-commerce applications through a major code migration initiative.

BUSINESS SITUATION

Charming Shoppes, Inc., is a leading specialty apparel retailer primarily focused on plus-size women's apparel through three distinct brands: Lane Bryant, Fashion Bug, and Catherines Plus Sizes. Charming Shoppes' e-commerce applications consist of three main external web sites that support the online operations of each of these major women's clothing brand.

These three e-commerce applications were based on incumbent code, including classic Active Server Page (ASP) code and Visual Basic 6 (VB6) code. As is often the case with applications based on legacy code, while classic ASP and VB6 met the initial demands of the applications, they inevitably presented significant shortcomings as Charming Shoppes expanded its e-commerce operations.

During the past several years, Charming Shoppes has enjoyed substantial growth in its e-commerce channels as well as its retail outlets. Whereas the legacy code had been able to manage previous e-commerce traffic, with the significant escalation of activity, the shortcomings were producing a wide variety of performance and maintenance issues. This included critical problems with transaction processing, where online purchases were interrupted and the consumer experience affected negatively.

Anticipating continued growth and facing what would likely prove to be a very active holiday season, Charming Shoppes proactively set about finding a solution to meet the challenges its legacy code had saddled the retailer with for some time.

Previously, Microsoft assigned a number of opportunities at Charming Shoppes to The Henson Group, Inc. (THG). Based on those successful engagements, Charming Shoppes tapped THG for this project.

With consultants and code experts highly skilled in Microsoft's groundbreaking .NET Framework technology, THG specializes in migrating clients' environments from unmanaged code to managed code and proposed a migration from classic ASP/ VB6 to ASP.NET and VB.NET.

SOLUTION

To resolve the various issues Charming Shoppes was experiencing with the legacy code its e-commerce applications were based upon, THG designed a tiered solution for the e-commerce site using .NET (VB.NET, ADO.NET, ASP.NET).



The development plan called for converting existing and enhanced VB6 code to VB.NET – called business objects which are used for the client's ecommerce site and in-store order process. THG also set about converting and enhancing ASP to ASP.NET.

And, THG would eventually implement the Master Pages template design for Charming Shoppes web pages, using XSD and XML Schema Definition, to formally describe the required elements to submit an order via ecommerce web site.

The Microsoft applications THG leveraged to accomplish the various components of the migration included Visual Studio 2003, Microsoft SQL Server 2000, and Microsoft Server 2003.

The actual schedule of the project included:

Phase 1 – XML and Schema

Phase 2 - Business Objects (Convert and enhance VB6, ASP code using VB.NET, ADO.NET, and APS.NET: Using a tiered approach, by separating Presentation, business, and Database access of data)

Phase 3 –Testing and Deployment

RESULTS

THG achieved all of Charming Shoppes' objectives for enhancing the functionality of its three e-commerce applications through a major code migration initiative.

Specifically, THG successfully converted the legacy code to tiered design, achieved enhancement to ASP.NET using Master Pages templates, re-deployment of the website, implementation of communication with In Store Order Processing system, and effective knowledge transfer to Charming Shoppes' programmers for developing applications using .NET.

Building on the Microsoft .NET platform now affords Charming Shoppes increased connectivity across the enterprise, with the ability to integrate Microsoft and third-party technology in modular ways. This provides for high degrees of reuse and greater flexibility in evolving applications over time.

The customer experience is also enhanced, as transaction processing issues were remedied with the code migration and customers now have the ability to purchase items that are out of stock in the store.

Looking ahead, Charming Shoppes' migration now positions the retailer to be much more closely aligned with Microsoft, as the migration was achieved just months ahead of Microsoft's scheduled release of .NET version 2.0.

Therefore, Charming Shoppes can now affect periodic "Code Reviews" to identify areas where the .NET Framework 2.0 can be leveraged to benefit from new features or new applications.

Overall, the .NET code will facilitate robust growth, both in terms of accommodating higher volumes of activity and transaction processing, as well as more flexibility in implementing new features to capitalize on customer trends.

About The Henson Group



Founded: June, 2000

Headquarters: New York City

Consultants: 37 (including both full-time and part-time professionals)

Partners: MS, HP, IBM, Cisco, Avicode, Dell, EMC, eXc Software, K2.net, Netscaler, Network Engines

Certifications: Microsoft Gold Certified and Cisco Certified

Official Microsoft Competencies:

Advanced Infrastructure Solutions
Business Intelligence
Information Worker Solutions
Integrated E-Business Solutions
Learning Solutions
Networking Infrastructure Solutions
Security Solutions

History: Founded by former Microsoft employees from the development teams in Redmond and Microsoft Consulting Services

Consultants: All MS Certified, most former Microsoft engineers, and each have a minimum of three years of vertical-specific experience

Annual Client-Retention Rate:
(2000 through 2004) 98%

Annual Client-base Growth:
(2000 through 2004) 50%

Company Description: THG is an award-winning Microsoft Gold Certified Partner specializing in deploying Microsoft technologies for U.S. and international companies across 20 industry categories.

Founded by former Microsoft employees from the development groups in Redmond and Microsoft Consulting Services, THG offers clients direct access to Microsoft's product groups and technical information often not publicly available.

THG's competencies include .NET application development, infrastructure deployments, Line-Of-Business solutions, security, product training, and strategic consulting.

Delivering projects in a fraction of the time it takes competitors, THG's proprietary project management process and attention to detail consistently produces a 98% client-retention rate.

Everywhere clients need THG to be, the consultancy has operations, engineers, and partners located in countries around the world that are committed to the highest level of client satisfaction.

To learn more about THG, please visit www.HensonGroup.com. For more information on how THG can deploy this type of solution in your environment, please call 800.980.1130 or e-mail Info@HensonGroup.com.