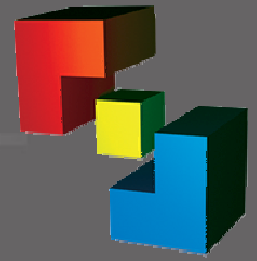




Case Study Lifetime Television



SQL Reporting Services

Award-winning Microsoft Gold Certified Partner **The Henson Group, Inc. (THG)** deployed a solution based on Microsoft SQL Reporting Services designed to significantly improve IT reporting for Lifetime Television's New Media division—the internal unit charged with managing the network Web site, www.LifetimeTV.com.

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GROUP

Lifetime
Television for Women

Project Vitals

Industry: Media (Cable Network)

Customer Profile: Lifetime TV is the leader in women's television and one of the top-rated basic cable television networks.

Business Situation: In early 2004, Lifetime launched a major technology migration initiative involving replacing its antiquated mainframe-based database technology with Microsoft SQL Server 2000. But, despite the migration, much of Lifetime's IT reporting processes were still manual-based and therefore inefficient. Additionally, especially challenging was the manual process of creating custom reports when necessary. Inevitably, the limitations with such manual processing meant that IT reporting simply never reached the level of functionality Lifetime's IT professionals would have preferred.

Solution: deployed a solution based on Microsoft SQL Reporting Services designed to significantly improve IT reporting for Lifetime Television's New Media division—the internal unit managing the network Web site, www.LifetimeTV.com.

Products Used:
Microsoft SQL Reporting Services

BUSINESS SITUATION

Lifetime is the leader in women's television and one of the top-rated basic cable television networks. A diverse, multi-media company, Lifetime is committed to offering the highest quality entertainment and information programming, and advocating a wide range of issues affecting women and their families.

Launched in 1984, Lifetime Entertainment serves nearly 87 million households nationwide. In 1998, Lifetime launched Lifetime Movie Network, now in 40 million homes, and in 2001, Lifetime Real Women. Lifetime Television, Lifetime Movie Network, Lifetime Real Women, and Lifetime Online are part of Lifetime Entertainment Services, a 50/50 joint venture of The Hearst Corporation and The Walt Disney Company, as is Lifetime magazine, which debuted in April 2003. As a major cable television network.

As a leading cable television network with such diverse media properties, Lifetime Television maintains a significant Web presence. This robust Web portal, www.LifetimeTV.com, is managed internally by Lifetime's New Media division.

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However, despite the migration, much of Lifetime's IT reporting processes were still manual-based and therefore inefficient. Additionally, especially challenging was the manual process of creating custom reports when necessary.

Inevitably, the limitations with such manual processing meant that IT reporting simply never reached the level of functionality Lifetime's IT professionals would have preferred. Therefore, when the migration project was launched, establishing effective, flexible report processing was always a consideration.

Meanwhile, THG already had a relationship with Lifetime, having previously designed and deployed a solution based on Microsoft BizTalk 2004 and including extensive custom .NET application development that integrated a series of mission-critical multi-media processing applications for Lifetime.

Based on the success of that project, Microsoft's strong endorsement, and the fact that THG was actually founded by former Microsoft engineers with strong ties to the various Microsoft product groups, Lifetime approached THG to develop a solution that addressed its reporting challenges.

SOLUTION

With Lifetime having completed its migration to Microsoft's SQL Server 2000, THG recommended IT executives within the New Media division (the entity that manages www.LifetimeTV.com) to deploy SQL Reporting Services to address its reporting shortcomings.

SQL Server Reporting Services is a comprehensive, server-based solution that enables the creation, management, and delivery of both traditional, paper-oriented reports and interactive, Web-based reports.

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An integrated part of the Microsoft business intelligence framework, Reporting Services combines the data management capabilities of SQL Server and Microsoft Windows Server with familiar and powerful Microsoft Office System applications to deliver real-time information to support daily operations and drive decisions.

An Integrated Architecture

SQL Server Reporting Services supports a wide range of common data sources, such as OLE DB and Open Database Connectivity (ODBC), as well as multiple output formats such as familiar Web browsers and Microsoft Office System applications. Using Microsoft Visual Studio .NET and the Microsoft .NET Framework, developers can leverage the capabilities of their existing information systems and connect to custom data sources, produce additional output formats, and deliver to a variety of devices.

Full Reporting Life Cycle Support

Lifetime now has the benefit of SQL Server Reporting Services ability to support the full reporting life cycle, including:

Report authoring. Report developers can create reports to be published to the Report Server using Microsoft or third-party design tools that use Report Definition Language (RDL), an XML-based industry standard used to define reports.

Report management. Report definitions, folders, and resources are published and managed as a Web service. Managed reports can be executed either on demand or on a specified schedule, and are cached for consistency and performance.

Report delivery. SQL Server Reporting Services supports both on-demand (pull) and event-based (push) delivery of reports. Users can view reports in a Web-based format or in e-mail.

Understanding these inherent advantages, THG proposed developing a custom SQL Reporting Services solution that would allow Lifetime to better leverage data and information across the enterprise, enabling its leaders to make more insightful, timely decisions when it matters the most.

Additionally, Lifetime requested robust security features be incorporated into the deployment, requiring extensive configuration.

Experts at creating highly customized and secure SQL Server Reporting Services solutions, THG developed a solution that also enabled Lifetime to extend information beyond the walls of the organization and seamlessly interact with customers, partners, and suppliers in real time.

RESULTS

Within the span of five weeks, THG designed and deployed a custom solution based on SQL Reporting Services that automated the creation and delivery of a sophisticated series of reports for the New Media unit.

These reports cover a wide variety of aspects associated with the functionality and performance of the network's Web site, from site traffic and user preferences to demographical information and feature usage.

Additionally, the solution now not only makes it much easier to modify existing reports, but streamlines the report creation process as well.

In order to address Lifetime's security concerns, THG basically re-code the process by which security parameters are verified against the authoritative source in Windows Authentication Service.

And lastly, insisting on an aesthetic appeal to enhance the improved functionality, THG designed a brand new report manager interface, customizing the look and feel how reports presented.

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
Information Worker Solutions
Integrated E-Business Solutions
Learning Solutions
Networking Infrastructure 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.