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ASNA Mobile RPG Case Study:

Caprabo – *Caprabo redefines enterprise workflows with ASNA Mobile RPG.*

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Caprabo redefines enterprise workflows with ASNA Mobile RPG

Caprabo is a Spanish supermarket company that started in Barcelona in 1959. It has since grown to a network of 320 supermarkets, most of which are in the urban areas of Catalonia and some in Navarra. More than 220,000 people shop in its stores every day. Caprabo is part of Eroski Group and accounts for 20% of its business.

Beyond its 320 brick and mortar stores, Caprabo is a pioneer in bringing supermarket shopping to the Web. It operates an online shopping and local delivery service (www.capraboacasa.com) and also offers its customers a first in supermarket shopping, a mobile supermarket shopping app.

Adding mobile to the back-office

Caprabo, a long-time IBM midrange shop, uses the IBM i as the back-end to its SAP ERP solution and also has several other proprietary RPG back-

At a glance...

Customer Profile:

Caprabo is a large Spanish supermarket company with 320 supermarkets in Catalonia and Navarra. Caprabo is an IBM i shop using SAP for enterprise management. It also has several proprietary RPG applications and uses ASNA's Visual RPG for its Website.

Situation:

While Caprabo has a good online presence and even mobile apps for its customers, its back-office applications were still centralized applications with some workflows dependent on Excel. Caprabo wanted to supplement its back-office application with focused mobile replacements.

Solution:

Caprabo chose ASNA's Mobile RPG to create IBM i smartphone and tablet apps to solve its mobile dilemma. To help get the projects done quickly, Caprabo employed ASNA's Services Team to help build the mobile user interfaces and provide general mobile development knowledge.

Benefits:

The mobile application development efforts at Caprabo have produced much better product loss management, better real-time management data, and improved productivity in general. This new generation of IBM i applications push information and answers to Caprabo users in the field, in real-time. They are no longer tethered to desktop browsers or 5250 emulators to get the answers they need.

Products:

AVR.NET, ASNA Mobile RPG

office apps. About 15 years ago, just as the Web was heating up, Caprabo started using ASNA products to create a Web-based warehouse management application. As frustrations started to appear with its centralized RPG-centric back-office system, Caprabo decision-makers started defining requirements for a new suite of IBM i mobile applications. These apps would be used by Caprabo employees to improve order management and sales tracking and reduce product loss.

We have a long and very successful history with ASNA. We've used ASNA's products for years and have much experience with its knowledgeable services team.

-Daniel Muñoz Champel, Caprabo IT and Logistics Director

Explains Caprabo's Daniel Muñoz Champel, IT and Logistics Director, "We have a long and very successful history with ASNA. We've used ASNA's products for years and have much experience with its knowledgeable services team. Having outgrown our old centralized system, we needed a new in-house mobile solution for better asset management and improved employee workflows. When it came to our attention that ASNA had a new RPG-based mobile IBM i application solution, we quickly became very interested in that."

This is the story of how Caprabo's dream of a new suite of mobile back-office IBM i applications became a reality with ASNA Mobile RPG and ASNA's Services Team—without the need for expensive mobile specialists or grueling mobile application development training.

Starting small

Prior to considering ASNA Mobile RPG, Caprabo had done research into developing mobile applications. The learning curves and time-to-deliver required for using traditional mobile technologies wasn't very appealing to the team. Although Caprabo has a very skilled RPG programming team, there wasn't time for the RPG team to learn the traditional mobile stack of JavaScript/HTML/CSS or native languages such as Objective C and Java.

ASNA Mobile RPG empowers RPG programmers to create IBM i smartphone and tablet apps with nothing but ILE RPG. An otherwise traditional IBM i RPG program provides the logic and database IO. At runtime, the RPG program dispatches its display file data through the IBM Open Access for RPG Edition API to the Mobile RPG mobile display file. No special skills beyond knowing RPG are required to be productive with Mobile RPG.

ASNA's sales team met with the Caprabo development team to introduce them to Mobile RPG. The Caprabo RPG team was clearly up to the RPG-side of the equation, but given the need to deliver mobile IBM i apps quickly, it engaged ASNA's Services Team to help with the creation of the mobile user interface and provide general mobile application design guidance. After a few meetings with ASNA, the Caprabo RPG team and ASNA Services Team created a small proof-of-concept application.

The scope of this app was purposely small; its intent was to prove the concept of RPG-driven mobile apps to Caprabo managers. Showing sales managers online sales results in real-time, it was distributed to ten users and was quickly deemed a huge success. Caprabo

users were especially impressed to see that beyond all the convenience the mobile apps offered, the mobile applications performed almost as fast as a traditional 5250 application.

Daniel Muñoz elaborates, "That small mobile app proved to me and other Caprabo management that RPG programmers could indeed deliver superb mobile IBM i apps. It made us realize that not only could mobile apps be built by our team (with a little ASNA help) but also that that mobile apps are a powerful tool for redefining employee workflows in the enterprise."

Mobile RPG: 1, Excel: 0

Like virtually every IBM i shop the world over, Caprabo has a few dependencies on Excel that it wants to replace with something less error prone and troublesome. In one case, an Excel spreadsheet was distributed every day to 300 stores for use with inventory management. The Caprabo RPG team created an alternative RPG back-end and ASNA's Service Team once again helped with the mobile UI. The resulting mobile app replaced the Excel-driven workflow and reports inventory management information now in real-time, updated every 30 minutes. It is in use daily now by 300 Caprabo users.

Empowered by their existing Mobile RPG successes, early in 2015 Caprabo's team started work on a new back-office mobile system to help its employees manage and execute daily business tasks. Once again, Caprabo's RPG team build the RPG back-end and ASNA's Services Team built the user interface with Mobile RPG. Written with mobile-first in mind, this responsive app works on smartphones and tablets, but also works just fine on desktop browsers. This application is still in progress, but is deployed in testing for Caprabo's users. Figures 1 and 2 show this app in action on an iPad. The early feedback from users is quite positive.



Figure 1. Order management in a subfile with multiple record selection and options



Figure 2. Sales data in a subfile with enhanced graph representation

Mobile redefines business workflows

Mobile application development efforts at Caprabo have produced much better product loss management, better real-time management data, and improved productivity in general.

Caprabo's experience with ASNA Mobile RPG is proving that mobile applications add substantially in the ability to re-craft previously centralized, traditional back-office workflows into mobile workflows that can be performed virtually wherever employees need to work. This new generation of IBM i mobile applications push information and answers to Caprabo users in the field, in real-time. They are no longer tethered to desktop browsers or 5250 emulators to get the answers they need.

I'm proud of the work our RPG team has done on these mobile applications. Between the work that our team has done (and is doing) and by leveraging our relationship with ASNA's Services Team we've delivered mobile applications quickly and effectively.
-Daniel Muñoz Champel, Caprabo IT and Logistics Director

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Mobile RPG applications are having a dramatic impact on how Caprabo uses the IBM i in its business. Any IBM i shop can easily achieve Caprabo's mobile application success with its own RPG team using ASNA Mobile RPG.

About ASNA

In its fourth decade as a market leader and innovator for IBM midrange systems, ASNA provides comprehensive and flexible solutions for modernizing IBM i applications to the Microsoft .NET platform.

ASNA enables companies to integrate and extend their RPG green screen solutions to .NET, the Web and Mobile, while preserving investments in IT and human resources. Our solutions are distributed worldwide and used by more than a million end users.

ASNA holds a Microsoft Gold competency in Application Development, is a Microsoft Visual Studio Industry Partner, an Advanced Tier Member of IBM's PartnerWorld for Developers and a Gold level partner of Microsoft's Platform Modernization Alliance.