The City of Redding, California grants building permits on the Web with ASNA Visual RPG for .NET

The City of Redding, California's City Hall is a busy place. A large percentage of the traffic at City Hall is home owners and contractors obtaining various permits. More than half of the permits the city issues are what's known as "over-the-counter" (OTC) permits which means the permit requires no formal approval; rather, the permit is issued at the time its fee is paid. There are many OTC permits, but two very popular ones are for water heater replacement and fire permits (which allow, at specific times during the year, open brush burning).

To ease the traffic flow at City Hall, the city's IT department set out to put much of its permit acquisition on the Internet. The City of Redding uses ASNA Visual RPG (AVR) to solve this problem.

Because OTC permits account for more than 60% of all permits, and because OTC permits simply need to be acquired and paid for, they were an obvious target for the first phase Internet permit acquisition project.

Prove the concept

The City of Redding uses an IBM i as the backbone of its IT infrastructure—all data lives on the IBM i and, before AVR, virtually every process was performed with a green-screen user interface. With an IBM i as the data provider, the city's IT team knew they needed a development environment that provided fast, secure access to IBM i data and they also wanted an environment that was easy to learn and that worked with its current Windows Web server environment.

Tim Stinar, a Programmer/Analyst with the City of Redding, was the lead programmer on the project. Tim had previous

AT A GLANCE

Customer Profile

The City of Redding is seen as proactive rather than reactive by focusing on what type of City they would like to be in the future and taking the necessary steps to assure they reach their goals.

Situation

To ease the traffic flow at City Hall, the city's IT department needed to put much of its permit acquisition on the Internet.

Solution

The City of Redding selected ASNA Visual RPG for .NET with a minimal investment in training.

Benefits

The RPG developers at the City of Redding reduced the building permit traffic at City Hall by 30%.

Products

AVR.NET, DataGate, IBM iSeries, OS/400, DB2/400, Visual Studio .NET

experience with ASNA's Visual RPG Classic product and in 2003 took a 5day ASNA AVR for .NET training course at ASNA's headquarters in San Antonio.

Says Tim, "I was very familiar with the basic AVR model and took the .NET class to learn how to write browser-based applications with Visual RPG for .NET. After taking that class, it was very apparent to me that AVR for .NET would be the perfect environment for us to use to create our online permit center."

In November 2004, the City of Redding rolled out the first version of its Permit Center Online. For that initial run, 238 burn permits were issued online—accounting for 11% of all burn permits issued that season. "We were excited that the initial pass of our Permit Center Online worked. With the experience acquired from our burn-permits online, we set out to expand the permit offerings to include as many of our OTC permits as possible." says Tim.

IBM i integration

The City of Redding's Permit Center Online, even when processing 100% of all OTC permits, still only represents 60% of the permits being processed by the city. The other 40% are processed with the traditional green-screen applications and face time with the applicants. All of the business logic, database access, and even credit card approval, is performed by routines in ILE RPG service programs.

Explains Tim, "The AVR for .NET Web application makes OS/400 program calls to route all requests through our ILE service programs. This lets us focus on the business logic and database access in a central place and then have two user interfaces (the green screen and the AVR for .NET browser application) access that central code. AVR for .NET's effective OS/400 program call mechanism was very key for our project."

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>
> Tim Stinar, a Programmer/Analyst

A roaring success

The initial phase of the Permit Center Online was a roaring success. Early this fall the City of Redding will roll out the first major expansion of its Permit Center Online. This will include several OTC building permit types. With the experience learned on the first phase of the project, even though the next version of Permit Center Online is substantially more complex, the City of Redding development team will have created it in about a month's time.

A happy Tim concludes, "AVR for .NET did a great job enabling us to create the Online Permit Center. Our RPG developers are familiar with the iSeries' record-level-access model and its CALL/PARM program—these are things that AVR for .NET does naturally. Once our developers sharpened their skillsets for the unique requirements of browser-based applications, we were quickly building Web sites!

"Our ultimate goal is to issue the majority of our OTC permits online. We think it's reasonable to eventually, as our residents get familiar with the service, issue about 50% of the OTC permits online. This translates to about a 30% reduction in the traffic to the physical permit center at City Hall."

About ASNA

ASNA, provides comprehensive and flexible solutions for modernizing IBM i applications to the Microsoft .NET platform. ASNA enables companies to integrate and extend their solutions to .NET, the Web and beyond, while preserving investments in IT and human resources. ASNA solutions are distributed worldwide and used by more than a million end users.

ASNA is a Gold Level partner of Microsoft's Partner Network, Microsoft Visual Studio Industry Partner, and an Advanced Tier Member of IBM's PartnerWorld for Developers. ASNA is also a gold level partner of Microsoft's Platform Modernization Alliance.

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