

CASE STUDY

Leading European Bookstore Chain

Modernizing to meet changing customer expectations

A major bookseller needed to reduce the time required to process special orders while minimizing ordering errors.

Challenge

A book retailer with more than 250 locations across Europe was using a custom IBM® i application based on a JDA merchandise and operations system. In addition to driving sales, margin, and cash flow, the system provided critical purchasing, receiving, physical inventory, pricing, and item data to staff at the stores. This system sits at the heart of the retail chain's IT infrastructure.

As graphical user interfaces and mobile applications have become the standard, the retailer's customers and booksellers alike have come to see the system's green-on-black interface as increasingly anachronistic and an obstacle to meeting customer expectations. In particular, booksellers were often frustrated when searching through thousands of results to find the exact item a customer may have been seeking. Moreover, the bookstore chain's team found it difficult to quantify the business impact of the system's constraints, making it equally difficult to justify the risk, time,

and cost of replacing something that worked fine from a technology perspective.

Results

The retailer's IT team adopted a bimodal approach to the problem, bringing in outside expertise to address the aging system's user interface in the short term, while also examining the larger IT landscape with a view to solving a number of business issues longer-term.

The team hoped to radically alter the system's appearance and ergonomics without fundamentally re-engineering all of the business logic that sits behind it, much of which was bound to the text-based interface. Of three potential alternatives, one offered only a very basic web-based rendering of IBM i screens, with additional HTML expertise required for further



enhancements. A second option included robust search functionality, but also would have required the re-engineering of business logic.

The third option, Rocket® LegaSuite® Web, offered similar search functionality without the need for code or logic changes. The team believed the solution also had the potential to extend across the whole system. This latter point was a critical requirement, as the team didn't want to create a partial solution that forced users to toggle between the older green-screen interface and the new web-based system. With agreement that LegaSuite Web was the best solution, the team began implementation in September 2016.

The internal IT team took a cautious approach, knowing they would need buy-in from booksellers to ensure successful adoption. Some booksellers had been using the other system for more than 18 years, with a strong degree of comfort.

Using a single store as a test case, the team

released an initial version to booksellers in December 2016. It included a special "log issue" button on each page that allowed users to provide feedback directly to the development team. Following additional changes and enhancements, the team released an updated version to 10 additional stores in late January 2017. The team continued to make enhancements, adding other "specialty shops" to fully test the extremes of the system. Following further trials and feedback, the full rollout commenced in early June 2017.

The system has now been in operation across all stores since the rollout was completed in August 2017. Since that time, not a single location has needed to revert to the older green-screen interface, and there has not been a single outage. The project has been so successful that thoughts of ripping and replacing the underlying IBM i application have fallen by the wayside, and what was originally considered a short-term fix now appears to be a long-term solution.

// We were able to deliver a stable and reliable solution that modernized the existing system without fundamentally re-engineering all of the business logic that sits behind it. The success of the project has turned a short-term fix into a long-term solution. //

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