



Customer Success Story

Chase-Pitkin Home and Garden

<http://www.chasepitkin.com/>

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IBM Business Partner NetSetGo builds ‘Do It Yourself’ commercial e-business for home improvement retailer

Leverages the power of WebSphere® to automate and streamline order entry and management

Background

Most home improvement retailers began their businesses by targeting the individual “do-it-yourselfer.” Now commercial businesses are starting to become more attractive to the home improvement retail industry. But the legacy IT technology in place at most retailers is not optimized to equip sales personnel, customers and managers to adequately serve this thriving market segment.

Challenge

With 17 stores serving upper New York state, Rochester-based Chase-Pitkin was no exception. Its direct sales force, which calls on contractors and developers, was hampered by antiquated paper-based order entry and management tools that required it to physically carry orders back from customer locations for entry and fulfillment. Back at the home office, separate systems were in place for checking inventory levels, pricing and order history. Customer self-service components did not exist at all. Because of this disconnect, orders could take several days to be processed and fulfilled.

“To be successful, we needed to automate and streamline the process of procuring products from beginning to end,” said Chris Dorsey, Chase-Pitkin CIO. “We wanted a single point of entry for product requests, and everything else that needed to happen would trigger itself based on specified business rules. The pick document would automatically generate after the order was placed. If additional inventory was required, the system needed to generate a transfer from another store, or a purchase order from a supplier, a delivery manifest to determine product delivery, and also feed a customer account information database.”

Solution

For assistance, Chase-Pitkin turned to NetSetGo, a full-service Web integrator and a Premier member of ParterWorld® for Software. NetSetGo specializes in building e-business enabling applications that leverage existing systems, but are front-ended with current technologies to gain the benefits of new technologies and efficiencies.

NetSetGo recommended IBM WebSphere® Application Server Standard Edition Version 3.5, IBM DB2® Everyplace Enterprise Edition V7.2, IBM DB2® Universal Database V7.2 and IBM VisualAge® for Java Version 3.5.3 to create the Chase-Pitkin Web and Wireless Point of Sale Extension.

“Chase-Pitkin had been a long time IBM customer, but was now looking for assistance in Internet and wireless to enable their legacy point of sale system,” commented NetSetGo Vice

President of e-Development Darrin Nelson.

“They were running AS/400 servers and using custom RPG-4 systems to generate business reports. Based on the fact that WebSphere Application Server can run native on the AS/400, and is portable to other operating systems, it made sense for us to recommend this platform.”

Nelson made a strong case for using DB2 instead of Oracle, since it integrated so well with the WebSphere platform. “It’s a tremendous value proposition, enabling Chase-Pitkin to leverage its AS/400 skill base using the existing hardware infrastructure, and build a portable, scalable application that delivers the value of an e-business solution.”

Through IBM DB2 Everyplace, Chase-Pitkin sales representatives have become more efficient. Sitting with customers at their locations, the sales reps can access the 76,000-SKU product catalog and transmit orders directly to the company’s IBM iSeries™-based Point of Sale system. Managers can set minimum margin requirements which enables the system to perform workflow and margin checks. There is also a series of web-based business intelligence features, such as generation of real-time profitability reports by customer, and real-time point and click reports on profitability (by customer and product line), sales performance, customer buying habits and more.

NetSetGo and Chase-Pitkin envisioned an extension of the application that would allow sales force mobility. Through the Chase-Pitkin Web and Wireless Point of Sale Extension, the sales force uses Compaq iPAQ™ PDAs to access the company’s back-office POS and inventory systems.

“The sales force can be taking orders while in conversation with the client,” said Dorsey. “And even before they leave the customer’s office, a pick ticket can be generated and a product sent on its way.

Ultimately, Chase Pitkin wanted to expose the solution to their clients via the Internet. Because it was WebSphere, we literally picked it up off the AS/400 and put it on the UNIX box in our data center with true portability,” said Nelson.

NetSetGo’s J2EE Java Framework (J2EE) provided the client device independence which enabled the wireless devices to interact with this WebSphere Java application. One of the many features/services of the J2EE framework is the abstraction of user interface definition leveraging Java, WebSphere, XML and XSL enabling the one application to service a myriad of client devices including PDAs, Smart Phones, and PC-based web browsers.

Benefits

Since the first phase went live late in 2000, Chase-Pitkin has fully integrated the solution with its existing POS system. ROI studies have shown that they have reduced administrative overhead in the commercial division. The average number of sales calls per day and sales per salesperson increased significantly within the first six months of rolling out the new applications.

For NetSetGo, this turned out to be a do-it-yourself project they plan to do again and again. Armed with the deep skills they gained from IBM certifications in WebSphere, DB2 UDB and VisualAge for Java, NetSetGo is marketing the solution as the “Electronic Order Entry System – eOES” and creating a strong value proposition for other retailers. NetSetGo is also licensing its J2EE Java and Websphere J2EE Framework to enable other Java Websphere solutions to realize as much as a 30% reduction in the development cycle for these projects.

Customer Quote

“We have made the investment in WebSphere and we are very confident in what it can do,” said Dorsey. “Because of WebSphere, we now have a portable, scalable, robust, fault-tolerant platform.”

About NetSetGo

NetSetGo, a Premier member of IBM PartnerWorld®, builds extremely robust eBusiness solutions that are often integrated with legacy back office systems. Recognized as a leader in the industry, NetSetGo continues to beta test new IBM software solutions. NetSetGo is composed of four lines of business: 1) eDevelopment – building and integrating e-Business solutions, 2) Hosting & Managed Services, 3) Network Services, and 4) Staff Augmentation. NetSetGo was awarded the IBM Beacon Award Best Websphere eBusiness Solution for this eOES system.

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