



Case Study | VicRoads

Smart client integration reduces call centre times by 40%. With another record year of vehicle sales expected, VicRoads takes positive steps to continually improve its service levels.

- ▶ **Critical issue**
 - Call handling times too long.
 - Call centre costs increasing.
- ▶ **Solution**
 - Programmatic integration of three host applications.
 - New smartclient user interface.
 - Improve the business process.
- ▶ **Results**
 - Average call time reduced by 40%.
 - ROI in 4 months.
 - Streamlined business process.
 - High reuse of existing applications.
 - No changes to existing applications.
 - Reduced operator training costs.

Background

VicRoads is the statutory authority responsible for registration of 4.3 million vehicles and licensing of 3.4 million registered drivers in the state of Victoria, Australia. VicRoads also provides a specialized service to lenders and borrowers of finance to assist in the purchase of motor vehicles. Its 2400 staff work in partnership with other government agencies and the private sector to provide cost-effective products and services to the community.

VicRoads call centres handle nearly 300,000 calls annually from prospective vehicle purchasers. The pre-purchase check requires access to three separate applications to determine if the vehicle is suitable for legal purchase. The System i based, Vehicles Securities Register developed with Syon 2E, stores information about financial encumbrances, for example the legal owner may be a financial institution. The Vehicle Registration application provides a detailed vehicle history including written off or re-registration details. The third application is the National Database of Australian Vehicles which holds information on vehicles, drivers and special conditions such as theft. All this information is vital to a safe and informed vehicle purchase decision.

Navigating these applications separately, performing numerous checks within and across them, and re-keying data, is the largest component of the average call time of 3.8 minutes. Because of this multi-application access, the potential for inconsistencies is high, forcing the operators to have to carefully and slowly review all relevant data.

The applications have evolved over the past 20 years into robust, dependable systems, however, invasive integration would be very difficult and costly. Call centre operators also require extensive training to master inconsistent text-based (green screen) interfaces with differing navigation methods. This makes a standardized business process difficult to implement.

Solution

Seeking to reduce average call duration, the Manager of the Vehicles Securities Register, Phil Reid, released a tender requesting shortlisted vendors to propose a solution with a unified interface for call centre processing. Phil said, "The back-end applications are large and complex so we wanted an integrated solution that did not require any changes to existing code. Changes, or even new access, to back-end applications would involve additional resources, and therefore costs, from our outsourcing partners. A non-invasive solution would provide faster implementation and payback."



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“This project highlights the rapid ROI and low risk offered by composite applications. We’re reusing pre-existing functionality in a smart way, integrating the applications and driving the workflow through a modern user interface.”
Phil Reid

The successful tenderer was looksoftware, who teamed up with Futuresoft Principal Harindra Wijesekera, delivering the smart client solution within three months. Business processes were reviewed and a new automated workflow was mapped to looksoftware’s smart client technology to access each application and return the relevant information to the Windows based smart client graphical interface. A prototype was reviewed with call centre staff and iteratively enhanced until a complete and efficient business process satisfied pre-defined test requirements.

The call centre smart client provides a single, integrated solution for the pre-purchase check process. Instead of switching between multiple applications and re-keying data, call centre operators work within a single smart client interface. All information related to the vehicle in question is retrieved in real-time from the three mainframe applications and presented in a rich graphical interface that summarizes potential purchase issues. The dynamic queries of the underlying applications follow a predefined workflow, designed to ensure all potential issues are immediately highlighted.

Automated retrieval of all vehicle data

The customer provides vehicle information such as the registration number, vehicle identification number, chassis number, engine number and the State where the vehicle was registered. This information triggers multiple processes to concurrently access the System i and System z applications. Basic information retrieved from the Vehicle Registration application allows the operator to confirm information such as color, make and State with the customer. During this conversation the

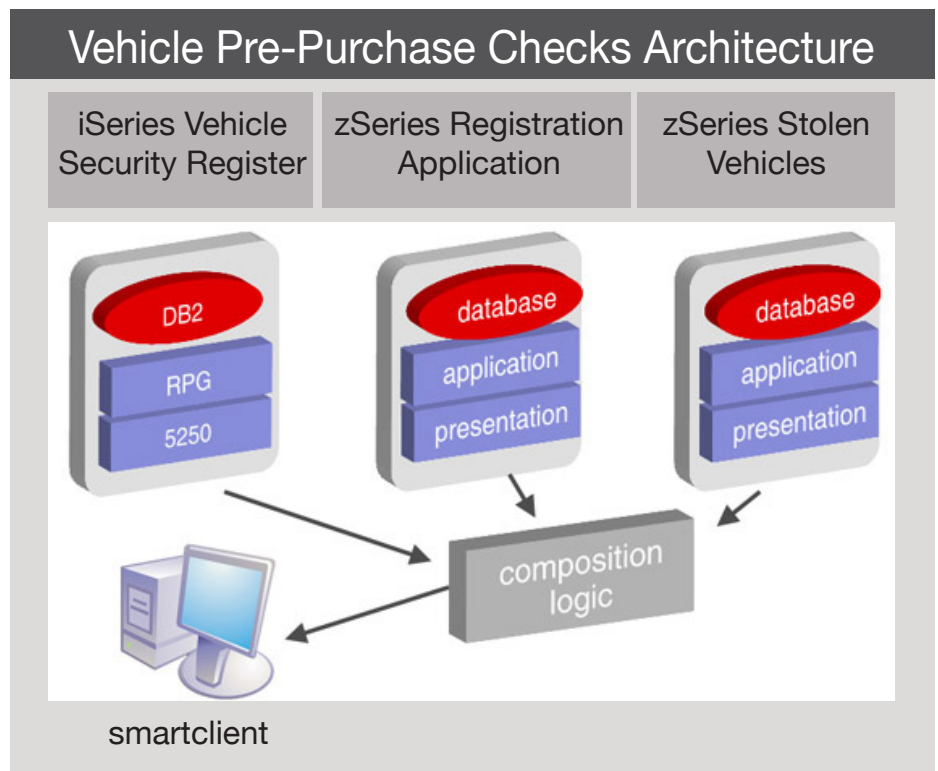
smart client application is requesting and receiving data from the back-end systems. The equivalent of 25 screen transactions are performed and the information is readied for review.

Unified smart client interface

The smart client interface consolidates the information from the disparate systems into a single rich graphical interface.

The datagrid is a rich graphical control that supports sorting and rearranging columns of data enabling operators to customize their view of the information to identify inconsistencies and concerns.

For example, if a vehicle with the same chassis number was stolen in another State some years ago, that information is highlighted and the operator can access further information if required. Other visual controls are used to highlight inconsistencies between the Vehicle Registration database and the National database. The smart client exploits local processing and resources to manage multiple concurrent connections to information sources and delivers the performance needed for high transaction based applications.





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Platform for voice recognition Integration

A key goal of application modernization is to allow existing applications to be easily integrated with new technologies such as Interactive Voice Response (IVR). The IVR project has now been completed,, interfacing directly with the same web service modules to provide an operator-less, voice activated pre-purchase check.

Platform for web services

The smart client project supports VicRoads' stated strategic direction towards web services. The business rules embodied in the service modules that drive the access to the legacy applications can be wrapped as web services using looksoftware's technology to enable easy reuse. The smart client interface is designed for call centre operators taking calls from consumers or car dealers interested in a specific vehicle. Another class of customer is vehicle auctioneers who need the same pre-purchase checks done for batches of hundreds of vehicles. By wrapping the service modules as web services the same functionality can be reused in a 'headless' environment, where the results are passed to an XML document rather than to the call centre operator, thereby further reducing costs and improving process efficiency by eliminating human intervention.

Multi-channel UIs

Another example of the potential for reuse is to provide the same pre-purchase service to the public. General consumers could conduct their own checks from home with a browser or in the car lot with a PDA or phone.

Benefits

40% reduction in average call duration

The project's success has been verified with the initial pilot rollout. The use of an agile development methodology meant constant involvement from the business users enabling the workflow to be continually refined. Phil Reid said, "We've measured a 40% reduction in average call time, which means a positive return on investment within 4 months. I expect to see further productivity improvements as operators become accustomed to the new system."

Improved customer experience

VicRoads customers needing pre-purchase checks have shorter wait times. Previously, customers had to wait while operators accessed multiple applications retrieving and

comparing vehicle histories. Now that the smart client system compares the records from the different databases and highlights inconsistencies, the operator no longer has to manually compare vehicle data. This reduction in average call time delivers a significant boost to customer service.

Reduced training time

VicRoads estimates simplified processes will reduce training costs by 20%.

Reduced risk and costs

VicRoads is responsible for providing accurate and adequate information to prospective vehicle purchasers. The risk of giving incorrect information is now considerably reduced because data from the three applications is cross-checked by the smart client and highlighted to the operator, thereby reducing risk, associated legal costs and potential compensation.

No infrastructure upgrades required

The VicRoads standard desktop configurations comfortably support the smart client's local processing requirements. The automated server-managed deployment has utilized existing servers, integrating existing Windows and System i resources.

Standardized and streamlined business process

All call centre operators follow the same, optimized business process designed to handle call variations efficiently. Michael Brennan, Call Centre Manager said, "The smartclient drives the workflow ensuring all operators follow the same call centre business process."

Cost-effective delivery of a composite applications solution

VicRoads' adoption of non-invasive modernization has delivered a 'new' solution within a few months, composed primarily of pre-existing functionality. This has been achieved without risking changes to the core System i application and by leveraging existing IT investments to deliver 'new' solutions rather than starting from scratch.



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