

ACS - Case Study

looksoftware™

Critical issue

- ▶ Productivity losses due to an inconsistent look and feel throughout applications. ACS needed a consistent user interface to enable the sales force to more effectively demonstrate across 14 core applications

Solution

- ▶ Advanced application modernization, automated web deployment and built-in application integration support, to be delivered in a short timeframe

Results

- ▶ 6000 screens refaced and integrated within 4 months
- ▶ 500 customers purchased ACS's upgraded product 'NewVision'
- ▶ Integrated green screen support
- ▶ Flexible, efficient deployment options with no need for customers to purchase additional software or web servers

looksoftware provides ACS with a proven path for i5 modernization

Background

Affiliated Computer Services, (ACS www.acs-inc.com) based in Texas, USA provides end-to-end business process and information technology outsourcing solutions to more than 10,000 commercial and government clients worldwide. With revenues approaching \$4 billion and 40,000 staff, ACS is ranked in the Fortune 500 list.

Challenge

The ACS Government Systems Division supplies over 30 applications to approximately 1,200 state & local government customers, including financial administration, property appraisal/tax billing and courts/justice departments.

The i400 applications suite includes Utility Billing, Capital Assets, Government Fund Accounting, Budgeting and GASB34 Financial Reporting, Public Works Costing, Government Payroll and Building Permits. These applications lacked a common look and feel as they were developed during different timeframes by different development teams, with some even inherited via acquisitions. A common problem encountered by the sales team when demonstrating the suite was that customers struggled to understand the unique requirements of navigating each application. This was due to the lack of a consistent user interface design in the green-screen environment and the expectation by most customers that a graphical user interface should be presented.

Solution

Mike Bauer, Director Financial & Networking Services said, "As we've grown the breadth of our government solutions through development and acquisition, maintaining a modern and consistent User Interface has

been a challenge. When evaluating application modernization options, it became clear we needed to do more than just re-face and web-enable."

ACS realized that to achieve their goal of having their entire customer base upgrade to the new solution, the modernized solutions needed to offer new features that went beyond basic UI improvements. Their criteria when evaluating application modernization tools were as follows:

- Application integration - including integration with web-based services and common desktop applications
- Integrated green screen support - allowing customers to choose their preferred UI style
- Reduced costs by simplified web deployment
- Flexible deployment options - ACS's customers range from small to large government departments. They required a solution that provided efficient flexible deployment options, without the need for customers to purchase additional software or web servers
- Consistent User Interface - to enable the sales force to demonstrate consistently across 14 core applications
- Get the job done in 3-4 months!



"After evaluating the market-leading alternatives, we found that **looksoftware's newlook and centric** products were the right tools for the job. We emailed sample screens to **looksoftware** for use in the demonstration. What impressed us compared to the other vendors we evaluated, was their responsiveness and the 'on-the-fly Dynamic Environment'. Within days of receiving the sample screens they were able to show our system running live in a browser-based UI, including an application integration example", said Kevin Lafeber, Vice President Government Systems Division.

Minimizing dual maintenance, experienced with their existing UI tools, was a key reason ACS chose **looksoftware**. The combination of rules-based architecture and the ability to make changes 'on-the-fly' meant over 6,000 screens were refaced and tested within the tight 4-month timeframe.

ACS chose to outsource the refacing and integration work to **looksoftware**. Mike said, "**looksoftware's UI expertise produced quality refaced applications including desktop integration in record time. Within 4 months we went to market with our new product branded 'NewVision', with 160 customers upgrading to 'NewVision' in the first month!**"

Trevor Perry, a consultant on the project commented, "Sometimes a rich client UI is required to provide high performance and sophistication. Browser-based UI's generally offer the simplest deployment, but some customers still insist on using emulation interface.

Often customers have very good reasons for ongoing emulation support.

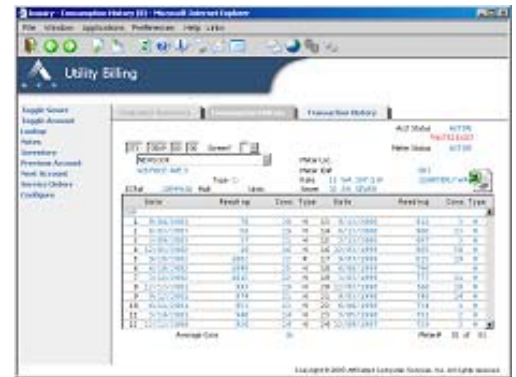
This was the case with ACS as some of their end users needed to easily switch back to their old familiar 5250 interface".

Benefits

"NewVision has gone beyond a reface. **newlook and centric's** ability to integrate our existing applications with modern desktop and web-based applications, has enabled us to provide our customers with additional functionality, as well as superior graphical capabilities", said Kevin.

The first release of NewVision included 15 new integration points across the application suite, including integration with 'Mapquest' within the Utility Billing application. Image integration is also utilized within the Capital Assets and Payroll applications while Excel and Word integration is used throughout the entire suite. **newlook's** automated web-deployment means ACS's customers have the ability to rapidly deploy the user interface without touching individual desktops.

"Using the 'Dynamic Environment' means our customers don't need to install web servers to benefit from NewVision. Some of our larger customers can deploy NewVision with their chosen web server to meet their own internal operational needs, but the smaller ones can still get the ease of deployment benefits, directly using the i5 virtual web-server, without having to install, configure and maintain any new hardware or infrastructure."



"Choosing **newlook and centric** has been an excellent business investment. Since the launch of 'NewVision' we have received approximately 500 orders for enhanced applications with more to follow! Our confidence in NewVision is reflected in our decision to make it our standard go-forward environment, within which we will support all our customers covered under ACS software support plans", said Mike Bauer.

"We've started a new project to modernize our property tax applications – this time its around 5,000 screens."

Mike concludes, "The 'Dynamic Environment' has transformed our products in a very short period of time giving our product suite an extended and profitable lifecycle, while also providing rich new features for our users". A win-win for all!

"We would recommend anyone looking to enhance their existing applications to talk to looksoftware" Mike Bauer.

