

SSUI - Case Study



Critical issue

- ▶ Customer perception that the iSeries was 'old technology' forced SSUI to evaluate methods of modernizing their applications or consider moving to another platform
- ▶ The application consisted of 25 modules

Solution

- ▶ Flexible graphical interfaces and desktop integration

Results

- ▶ Within one month SSUI staff had refaced, extended and integrated around 1000 screens, including multiple Excel integration points
- ▶ The rejuvenated application is on the up with strong, new sales growth

Easy integration rejuvenates software business

Background

Software Solutions Unlimited Inc. (SSUI) is an iSeries solution provider to the K-12 public education industry in the US State of Georgia. Established in 1985, SSUI's original applications were developed for the IBM S/34 and were then progressively migrated to the S/36, AS/400 and today rely on IBM's iSeries platform.

Like many iSeries application solutions the modules have grown in number, functionality and robustness to provide a comprehensive solution for small and large school districts in Georgia, USA.

Challenge

The application consists of 25 modules including integrated Financials, Human Resources and Student Information. In addition to installing and customizing the software, SSUI also provides hardware installation and training – the complete solution traditional IBM Business Partners are recognized for.

A growing customer perception that the iSeries was "old technology" forced founder Robin Wilson to evaluate methods of modernizing SSUI's applications or consider moving to another platform.

Robin knew his customers needed the reliability and scalability of the iSeries servers, but also wanted the easy-to-use, flexible graphical interfaces and desktop integration offered by NT based applications.

"A rewrite wasn't required and just didn't make good business sense. Most of the refacing alternatives could provide the required browser based UI, but finding easy application integration support was the real test. We chose looksoftware's dynamic approach for speed and easy integration support."

The first implementation step was 3 days of onsite consulting from **looksoftware**. Customizing the recognition engine for SSUI's applications required an appreciation for **newlook's** global settings, filters and generic rules.

Integrating student images with the iSeries application required **newlook's** VB-like macro capability and introduced **newlook's** object model support.

Solution

Within one month SSUI staff had refaced, extended and integrated around 1000 screens, including multiple Excel integration points and importing graphics for student and employee images.

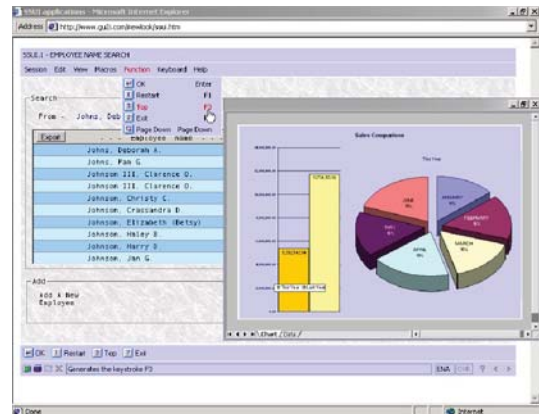
The first real test came a week into the project when one of SSUI's customers was invited to review the progress made. Robin said, *"Within 15 minutes, we had our first order! Since then, we've rolled out 20 sites in around 9 months."*

"12 months after making the decision to partner with looksoftware, we're much more competitive, our business is growing again and we're planning to move into new markets."

Robin Wilson, CFO



"We would strongly urge other iSeries ISV's to ask **looksoftware** to demonstrate their tools with your applications. Not only does it offer the potential to keep you competitive, it can open up new avenues of opportunity - and that's something none of us can ignore."



SSUI's customers, like most iSeries shops, also rely on Windows desktop and office applications. The common customer request has been for easy integration of iSeries application data with the Microsoft applications.

"We have the strengths of the iSeries back-end and the ease of use of the graphical front-end.

Benefits

"We can now compete with NT based applications, integrate with desktop applications as well as deploy over the Web. And, importantly, for those few users that want it 'the way it always was', we can flick a switch to activate **newlook's** integrated emulation support."

The impact on SSUI's business has been significant. Revenues have increased 35% since starting with **newlook** 12 months ago.

"**newlook** has added new life to our products - we have refreshed our solutions without the risk and expense of rewriting or converting.

We've recently been invited by the State Government to demonstrate our applications to hundreds of Georgian based school districts. During demonstrations most folks think the applications are running on some type of PC server platform - the iSeries has become much more 'modern' in their eyes."

Robin's business philosophy is simple – "Satisfied customers are what drives business decisions – today's customers demand easy-to-use, flexible, reliable solutions – **newlook** and the iSeries allow us to deliver what our customers want without the retraining and complexities of the other alternatives."

An important element of SSUI's success has been their determination to do more than provide a reface, enter **looksoftware's centric!**

"Just making your application look better isn't enough. Customers need to justify software purchases and upgrades, so new functionality that clearly improves productivity and

*reduces costs is essential. **centric's** ability to directly access most databases including DB 2, SQL Server and other data, provides multi-platform application integration that goes way beyond refacing."*

Robin was also quick to identify the services opportunity. "Once our customers started using the new integration functionality, they started requesting personalized integration which we were only too happy to provide. We can deliver those services completely remotely - no need for anyone to touch the desktop, so we can personalize the application, the interface and the integration without necessarily changing the underlying RPG application or leaving our office."

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