

Arkona - Case Study

looksoftware™

Critical issue

- ▶ Host applications were perceived as outdated
- ▶ Required a modernized solution that addressed look and feel without increasing complexity of applications

Solution

- ▶ Direct integration with server-based RPG and Java Programs
- ▶ Rich GUI support
- ▶ smartclient deployment

Results

- ▶ Modernized browser-based interface
- ▶ Application integration
- ▶ Web-based access
- ▶ Support for secure SaaS distribution
- ▶ Future opportunity to expand SOA compliant web services

#1 Ranked Provider of Dealer Management Solutions – 2007*

Background

Recently selected as the Top Ranked Dealer Management Solution (DMS) Provider for 2007, Arkona, Inc. is a leading supplier of fully-integrated business management solutions targeted at the automotive dealership industry. Arkona has enjoyed steady growth since initial product shipment late in 1998 – now counting more than 130 employees and around 850 (dealer) clients in all regions of the United States representing all the major car manufacturers including Acura, BMW, Chrysler, Ford, Dodge, Buick, DaimlerChrysler, GM, Honda, Hummer, Mazda, Subaru, Mitsubishi and many more.

Strong growth, a comprehensive integrated product range and web-based delivery, encouraged the recent acquisition of Arkona by DealerTrack Holdings, Inc. (NASDAQ: TRAK) of Lake Success, N.Y. With 22,000 dealers, DealerTrack Holdings, Inc. is a leading provider of on-demand software and data solutions for the U.S. automotive retail industry, projecting revenues and net income growth of \$230MM and \$21MM respectively, this financial year.

Arkona's web-based DMS provides automation of all aspects of a car dealership including finance and insurance, parts, service, accounting and back-office functions, including payroll and sales management, and integrates with third parties like NADA and Kelley Blue Book. All this functionality is available on-demand. The "Software as a Service" (SaaS) basis of Arkona's applications means customers can implement quickly, without expensive infrastructure upgrades, at around 1/3 the price of competitors.

* Auto Dealer Monthly – April, 2007

Challenge

Jim Jensen, Product Manager at Arkona explains, "Our main problem was that the host applications were perceived as outdated. Although the IBM System i platform under the covers is state of the art, many users still think it's 'old technology' because of the look of the green screens. The younger generation of users demand modern applications - they are very unsure about how to navigate the 5250 interface."

For several years, Arkona had been looking for a modernization solution that could address the look and feel issues quickly and easily, without increasing the complexity of the continued enhancement of their applications. They had evaluated many alternatives without success until they found **looksoftware** on the internet. "Our initial interest was **newlook's** support for modern user interfaces, but we were very pleased to see that there was strong support for application integration and web services using **soarchitect**," continued Jensen.

He further observed, "Continued enhancement is required to remain a market leader, so **looksoftware's** focus on reuse rather than redevelopment with new languages means we can continue to use our preferred RPG language."

"We are extremely pleased with the ease of making changes and deploying them in our already complex environment."

Jim Jensen, Product Manager, Arkona



ARKONA

“Overall, we have been very impressed with looksoftware’s products, especially their ease-of-use, training and support and, of course, the excellent outcome of our modernization project.”



“Also important in our selection of looksoftware was the ‘on-the-fly’ dynamic engine, which generated most of the new UI automatically, without sacrificing the quick response times our customers had come to expect from 5250-based applications,” concluded Jensen.

Solution

looksoftware’s partner program provided a fast start, and the new browser-based GUI was available for testing within 3 months. The web-based **smartclient** deployment provides fast performance, support for features like type-ahead that are required by transaction-based applications, and rich GUI support.

Centralized server-managed deployment provides the easy, web-based access expected of leading SaaS applications. *“We are extremely pleased with the ease of making changes and deploying them in our already complex environment”*, stated Jensen. *“Overall, we have been very impressed with looksoftware’s products, especially their ease of use,*

training and support and, of course, the excellent outcome of our modernization project.”

Arkona has taken advantage of scripts and macros to integrate directly with server-based RPG and Java programs and is planning web services integration as the next modernization step.

Benefits

Arkona’s existing customers are very pleased with how much easier it is to train their employees using the browser-based interface, and their sales team is excited to demo and sell the GUI interface!

Since launching the modernized solution, the sales team has even more reason to look forward to demonstrating the DMS. According to Rich Holland, President and CEO of Arkona, *“We are probably the fastest growing DMS provider, with around 12 to 20 new dealerships welcomed into the Arkona family every month.”*

Regardless of the type of dealership, Holland notes that dealers

need to gain any technological advantage they can to compete in today's highly aggressive marketplace and a quality DMS suite can help them stay ahead of the curve. Arkona’s modernized DMS can now easily integrate with any new application, technology or device that supports web services.

“One of our real strengths is our method of deployment. We offer our tools via the internet, so the store does not have to make a substantial investment of hardware or licensing of technology. Our full DMS suite – with its inventory management tools, F&I products, all integrated with accounting solutions, wrapped with a CRM alternative – provides a complete turnkey solution to meet the information system needs of any auto retailer, whether they are a franchised or non-franchised dealer,” Holland explains.

Arkona and looksoftware have put together a sure-fire recipe for ongoing success!

