

WBHO - Case Study

looksoftware™

Critical issue

- ▶ Application outdated and very limited in flexibility for change

Solution

- ▶ Reuse existing application
- ▶ Browser-based, rich graphical user interface
- ▶ Newly defined interfaces
- ▶ Multi-platform integration

Results

- ▶ Application converted in 5 weeks by 2 people
- ▶ Easy to use scripting features made PC integration a breeze
- ▶ Improved user experience
- ▶ Major reduction in training time for new users
- ▶ Reduced desktop maintenance

Reuse extends core application by 20 years!

Background

As a leading force in construction in Southern Africa, WBHO Construction [Pty] Limited was established in 1970 and is principally involved in Building Construction, Civil Engineering, Roads and Earthworks. The group is additionally engaged in an expansion programme into greater Africa as well as internationally and has around 7,500 employees. It is presently one of the largest construction companies in Southern Africa and is listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. The group's turnover for the past year increased by 40% to R8.1 billion (US\$1.2b approx) and attributable earnings increased to R318 million (US\$46m approx), an improvement of 39%.

WBHO's offices are strategically located in Sandton, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth and East London. Construction activities, which cover the full spectrum, are divided into three main operating divisions, Building Construction, Civil Engineering and Roads, and Earthworks. Their Australian subsidiary, Probuild Constructions, has its headquarters in Melbourne, **looksoftware's** home town!

The driving force behind WBHO is a core of dedicated, hands-on management professionals whose experience spans decades of major construction projects in southern Africa, the Middle East and various Indian Ocean islands. The fact that the management and staff have a significant shareholding in the company means that clients can be assured of 100% commitment.

Challenge

The BLU (system application) had been developed some years ago and of course was a great example of good old green-screen technology! Fine for the 80's but very unappealing today. Progressively, the users started seeing the limitations of the application with a growing sense that it was outdated and very limited in flexibility for change. There was no ability to interface across platforms and no opportunity to really improve the look and feel and navigation capabilities.

Solution

The team at WBHO evaluated several different options, and their research lead them to **looksoftware**. **newlook** had the fastest turn-around time for transforming and modernizing existing applications with the newly defined interfaces that were required. All this, whilst still maintaining their usage of applications on the network to a minimum.

By simply transferring the 5250 data stream, **newlook's** ease of use made it simple to train the developers in the use of the product. The easy-to-use scripting features made PC integration a breeze.

There was no need for intensive training and it took only 480 hours to convert the whole application with **newlook** – roughly 5 weeks effort for two people!



WBHO

“newlook has changed the perception of our users. They are now more eager to use the application and to learn the various facilities that are now available to them.”

Benefits

With newlook's web deployment feature, real savings have been achieved with regard to reduced desktop maintenance. There's no need to have technical staff running around installing emulation software on the users' PCs.

Another major benefit is that the users are now actually reading the screens! Previously, the green screen was very busy – with data that was not often required. The antiquated look, caused users to pay less attention to the screens, and this could lead to errors and time lost. Now with the modernized application, the users are actually paying more attention to the information on their screens because it is just so more easy on the eye! This has lead to a major reduction in training time of new users because the application is much more intuitive and has reduced the number of “how do I” calls to the support desk!

Modernized HR Menu



Nick Barnes said, “More than one user has actually commented on how much “faster” the system runs on this new software. It’s amazing from a user perspective that they think it’s a whole new machine with totally different software! They’re saying it’s so much faster than the old one!”

Great stuff - this is what the team were hoping for!

“Not only is the new user interface better, newlook provides a fast, easy-to-learn and intuitive development interface, and now our main challenge is to get the developers to think more about the graphics, so as to provide a great user experience”, said Michael Armstrong.

Summary

WBHO are confident that they have extended the existing application and architecture for at least another 20 years. This will save the company from the distraction – and therefore time & money – of having to look at alternative solutions.

Re-writing the application in another language is just not necessary. And as the team at WBHO has discovered, that means enormous savings by not having to reskill staff, re-write applications, project manage the development and then handle the difficult task of swapping out the old for the new.

“newlook has changed the perception of our users. They are now more eager to use the application and to learn the various facilities that are now available to them. newlook has definitely created a more positive vibe within the company for both users as well as developers.”

That commitment to professionalism is being tested yet again. It's all systems go for WBHO as they move full steam ahead with the development of three FIFA World Cup stadiums in preparation for the 2010 Soccer World Cup!

An opportunity to literally kick a few more goals!

