PIONEERING EFFICIENCY

Automating Customer Communications to Retain Market Leadership

As one of the first container and logistics companies in the world, ContainerPort is a pioneer in its field, setting the standard for the competition. This pioneering spirit is their defining characteristic, the heart and soul of the company that gives them a competitive edge. But, being the leader can be dangerous, particularly when it comes to Information Technology. The company needs to rely on great people and products to succeed.

ContainerPort, with home offices in Rocky River, OH, was founded 32 years ago. With business services spanning container shipping logistics, terminal operations and container equipment service and repair, ContainerPort is well positioned to deliver on its offer of integrated "value-added intermodal service." The company employs about 400 people.

The keys to executing "value-added intermodal service" are operational efficiency and customer service. Recently, the company has been turning to information technology to help achieve tangible improvements in these areas. ContainerPort's IT department, under the leadership of Mike Balog, is made up of four busy employees supporting the entire business, across all of its divisions. They work closely with senior management to help the company meet its objectives. The department takes the efficiency directives as seriously as anyone else at ContainerPort, so when they saw the opportunity for a win-win solution they took it right to management. The process they identified for improvement was distribution of the daily account activity communication that is sent to all customers.

The activity report is comprised of a summary of current inventory and movements of customer's containers. This is critical information for the customer's operations and must be received on a timely basis. Historically, this important task was accomplished by manually sending over 1,000 faxes every day – a huge drain in resources. Mike and his staff pitched an automated solution to management. They envisioned a system that would compose reports from data on their AS/400, then send the reports according to customer preferences, either via email or fax. Emphasis was placed on shifting as much of this activity to email as possible. If properly implemented, the solution would result in more consistent communications and would free up a lot of wasted resources.

> ## PRODUCT FOCUS
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> WebReport/400 v6.0
> *Kisco Information Systems*
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> **WebReport/400** is an e-Business software product for the IBM iSeries-AS/400. It provides two functions for electronically processing iSeries-AS/400 reports. It can send reports as Email. WebReport can also convert reports to simple HTML, RTF, PDF or CSV documents for deployment on a company's Intranet or at their Internet Website.
>
> **For more information:**
> www.kisco.com/webreport

With a team of only 4 to support the entire business, custom development was out of the question. An off the shelf solution was the only option. It would have to be able to handle high volumes of output without any user or operator intervention. Furthermore, the package would have to be easy to use and understand. Mike did not want to retool any existing code or processes, so the package would have to contain APIs to plug into

ContainerPort's current applications. Finally, the package would have to come with responsive, customer-centric support. In a nutshell, the company needed a solution with seamless, automatic integration that could be installed and supported by a small team, with a minimum of effort and little increase in administrative overhead.

After evaluating three options, ContainerPort finally settled on WebReport/400 from Kisco Information Systems. ContainerPort took advantage of Kisco's 30-day free trial offer to fully evaluate WebReport/400. According to Mike Balog, within that time-frame they were able to "play" with the package and test it across their wide-spread network.

By the end of the trial period, ContainerPort had made their decision. The critical factors in the decision included the product's ease of management, programmability, and Kisco's reputation for responsive technical support.

Implementation, from the purchase of WebReport/400 to its rollout in a production environment, took ContainerPort one week of coding and testing. According to Mike, Kisco's support was critical in getting up and running so quickly. "The entire installation went smoothly," relates Mike, "but we ran into one issue." The system was failing on email addresses that were incorrectly entered by end users. However, after a little time on the phone with Kisco the problem was solved. "They wrote a PTF for us," explains Mike, "and we were ready to go into production soon thereafter."

The fully automated process quickly generated the results the business had envisioned, with customer satisfaction increasing with the level of communication and the new flexibility in report delivery. Customers were able to reliably receive reports in the most convenient media format. An additional benefit was improved communications and increased problem solving turn around time between customers and account representatives. The simple act of being able to forward an emailed report to an account representative drastically reduced problem solving response time.

Additionally, with the software installed, Mike's team was able to find another customer-centric use for it, in the area of quote delivery. By plugging WebReport/400 API calls into a pre-existing sales quotation system, the software now powers a system in which customer service representatives take customer information over the phone, then ask the customer how they would like the quote delivered, via fax or email? The customer tells his preference and with a single keystroke, the quote is delivered. As with the automated reporting solution, the quoting system dramatically increases productivity while impressing customers.

WebReport/400 allows ContainerPort to continue pioneering in the field of container shipping and logistics. And it lets them pioneer into areas that realize tangible benefits in the bottom line. When implementing a software solution can simultaneously achieve the dual aims of improving customer service and internal efficiency, then the label of industry pioneer is truly appropriate.