ERICOM SOFTWARE

the **IRISH NEWS**

PowerTerm® Host Publisher helps The Irish News improve information flow and business efficiency

The Challenge

To link the company's Intranet to the organisation's back-office applications to provide real time access to customer related information, and hence improve the flow of information and improve the efficiency of the business.

The Solution

PowerTerm Host Publisher allows the Irish News' advertising team to easily access information from existing legacy systems through a web-browser.

Customer
The Irish News

Host Connectivity Solution
PowerTerm Host Publisher

Host Server
SCO OpenServer with Informix based application

Users
110 users within the organisation

Benefits

PowerTerm Host Publisher requires no modifications to the legacy application(s) nor software installation on the individual client devices.

A web-based front-end presents information in familiar HTML format with click-through navigation, which is easily customised.

"With PowerTerm Host Publisher we are able to put together a page that looks like a web page and people find that easy to work with, it's such a familiar way of seeing information. We worked with the sales team to be sure that the pages were easy to use and navigate. It has, without a doubt, made their job much easier."

Liam McMullen
Systems Resources Manager
The Irish News

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Background

The Irish News is an independent newspaper that sells more than 50,000 copies a day throughout Eire and the UK. The Belfast-based daily, founded in 1891, delivers an award-winning print and on-line newspaper. Liam McMullen, Systems Resources Manager and his team provide IT support for the newspaper's 110 staff.

The finance department at the Irish News uses a specialised accounting system that is custom-written for the newspaper industry. In late 2000, Liam's team faced a problem of access to this information – the advertising sales and financial management departments both needed to see and update the same data, but the existing accounting application with its "green screen" and function key driven menus was proving unsuitable for the advertising team to operate.

The database application, which runs on a Unix server, stores details on over 50,000 separate accounts accessed on a day to day basis. Being an integral part of the newspaper's back-office operation the application is essential to the successful running of the newspaper. For example, the application stores all the advertising orders, client details and credit status. The advertising sales team require access to this information when they are dealing with clients. Although the program is suitable for the financial users, the sales team was uncomfortable using function keys and shortcut keystrokes. Also the traditional method of weekly printouts was cumbersome and did not provide a timely flow of up-to-date information. It was becoming obvious sales needed an alternative way of getting the information they required.

"Ericom's support has been great. They worked alongside us to set it up and get things running. They have continued calling to check that everything is OK and to see if we need any other help."

Choosing a Solution

Finding the solution to resolve the situation involved careful consideration of the available technologies, Liam explains: "We researched the alternatives with very open minds and looked to a number of sources for information. There could have been any number of technologies capable of solving this problem, each with a number of companies supplying good software."

Liam came across Ericom and its web integration solution while he was researching online. After reading about its software, he contacted Ericom's UK office and discussed the Irish News' dilemma with them. Ericom consulted with the Irish News to find out exactly what their requirements were and developed a proof of concept that demonstrated how easy it would be for the advertising team to access financial information using an internet-based interface.

Enabling Legacy Integration

Ericom's PowerTerm Host Publisher software allows an organisation to easily access information from existing legacy systems, through a web-browser. Being a non-invasive approach, there are no modifications required to the Legacy application(s) and no software needs to be installed on the individual client devices. A web-based front-end presents information in familiar HTML format with click-through navigation, which is easily customised.

PowerTerm Host Publisher is an ideal solution for the Irish News. The sales team browser pages could be customised making it easy for them to identify and work with the data they needed. As users, they would find the HTML format an intuitive way of finding and navigating the information. In addition, because the existing financial system would not have to be adapted in any way, the accounts department would not be affected at all by the web-enablement. Liam and his team would also avoid the considerable time, cost and risk involved in transferring data to a new system. An added advantage was that Ericom's unique approach enabled Liam to integrate only the part of the accounting application that was required. This meant that he could shorten the project time considerably and focus on the specific business processes that needed to be integrated with the company's Intranet.

In addition, Liam was impressed by the support that Ericom offered from both its UK offices and its Israel-based engineers. Once deployed, Ericom has continued to support and assist Liam whenever he has required it. An added bonus has been Ericom's ability to assist with some of the development work accelerating the initial project implementation.

Solution by Partnership

Managing the new software has been trouble-free and Liam's team has found much less demand for desktop support. "The system seems to run itself and our support team have had no problems getting to know it and working with it. Training users to work on the software is very straightforward and people find it easy to get around. We've seen a reduction in desktop calls, which is a real benefit for any support department."

Liam says that being able to develop using standard development tools and languages with PowerTerm Host Publisher is a significant advantage when wanting to roll out solutions to a tight time scale. In addition, we have been able to include some new business logic, highlighting background colours to show account status etc, which has enhanced the information we display on the Intranet. By using web pages, the 'look n feel' of the final solution has benefited the sales team. "With Host Publisher we are able to put together a page that looks like a web page and people find that easy to work with, it's such a familiar way of seeing information. We worked with the sales team to be sure that the pages were easy to use and navigate. It has, without a doubt, made their job much easier."