

Wholesale & Retail Information System Case Study

Industry

Office Products
Wholesaling

Technology

Sun JDK 1.4
TOPLink 2.5
Apache Tomcat
InterBase 6.0
XML4J
InetSoft StyleReport
AsyncProfessional
Install Anywhere
IntelliJ IDEA

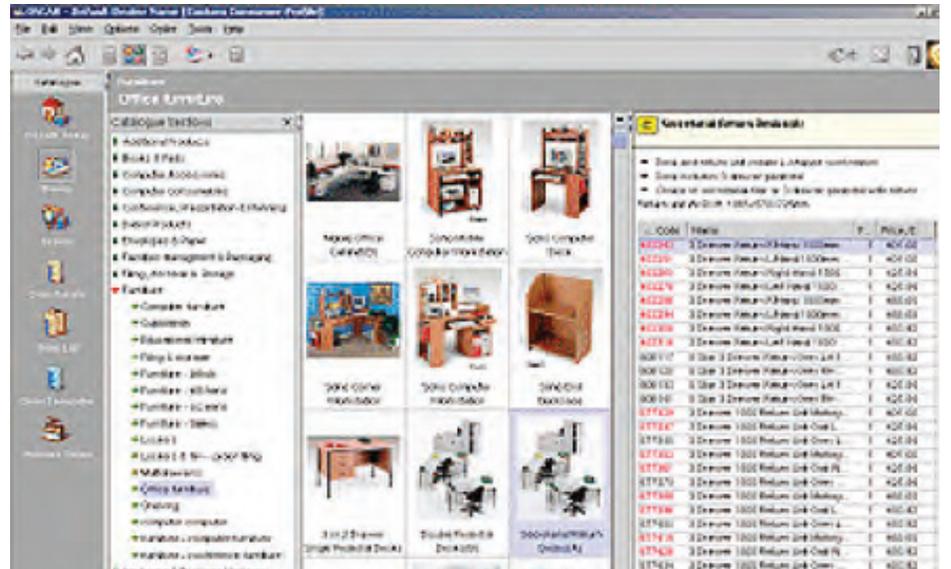
Project Type

Re-Engineering and Solution Development

Project Size

70 man-months

Spicers Wholesaling Limited is Europe's largest office products wholesaler, with businesses located in UK, Ireland, Germany, France and Spain. The company serves almost 6000 dealers in the UK alone and has almost \$450 million in sales for the EU.



Challenge

With hundreds of offices and dealers working across Europe, our client needed a solution that would provide handy and flexible functionality for intercommunication between dealer and consumer sides in matter of products browsing and ordering, orders transmission and product catalogue maintenance.

Solution

The New OSCAR system is the next generation of OSCAR software developed by our company for Spicers since 1996. We proposed changes to the user interface to retain the existing functionality, yet make it easy to use and more customizable. Together with the client, we developed requirements for the new system, such as all functionality in one application, Web access to the system, cheap and simple software localization to other languages, and others.

A user-friendly interface was required to minimize the time spent by the technical support team solving system configuration problems for inexperienced users. To reduce the cost of distributing copies of the software to over 6,000 dealers and their consumers, no royalty-based third-party components were used.

Dealer's installation of OSCAR is intended for tailoring the office products catalogue and relevant configuration information. A dealer is given the ability to administer several consumer profiles, customize the catalogue and pricing information supplied for each consumer independently and personalize the catalogue software with the dealer's company information including address details, company logo, program name, etc.

Consumer's installation of OSCAR provides a wide scope of functions. Browsing and search facilities of the product catalog, several search methods; building a purchase order and its transmission to a dealer's system via modem, FAX or e-mail; running reporting functions on the purchase orders history; controlling purchasing budget; flexible organization structure maintenance, and many other.

Technical Implementation

Based on our extensive experience in the development of electronic catalogues and multi-user network systems, we proposed a packaged solution capable of working in either standalone or multi-user network mode. An application suite approach was selected to provide a solution that would be both resource-efficient and modular. The team developed a custom, client-server solution for inexpensive and reliable database access supporting up to 50 concurrent network users with zero cost for distributable components.

Results

The New OSCAR system has replaced the older OSCAR system in thousands of locations, and users love it. A survey showed that New OSCAR is very easy to use, can be easily incorporated into a network environment and provides a 50% time saving for ordering. New OSCAR helps to reduce the operating costs, increase efficiency and further establish Spicers Ltd. as a leader in its market.

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