

ISI Systems Successfully moves into Client/Server

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ISI Systems Inc. needed to begin the transition into a Client/Server infrastructure to maintain a competitive edge in the insurance business. The first of many client/server projects in the queue at ISI is the TPS-Integrator. The full life-cycle project's mission is to provide integration of six existing systems (DOS, Novell, Windows and three Mainframes) into one comprehensive system that can be accessed by several different categories of users. ISI's vision included the creation of a new comprehensive system capable of communicating and sharing data among the legacy systems in a non-invasive manner. This design philosophy required the creation of a Presentation Layer tasked with providing a Graphic User Interface (GUI) with industry standard *look-and-feel*, as well as capitalizing on the existing application processing logic. This approach capitalizes on reuse and minimizes risk and expense. ISI and CTG addressed these requirements by supplying "best fit" technology, experience, and process (see article by Mike Engel).

CTG recommended the development of a Functional Prototype (proof-of-concept) prior to diving into the full life-cycle project. Client/Server and distributive systems is a complex heterogeneous world of mix-match and integration of non-vendor related products. A proof-of-concept represents a subset of the full life-cycle effort and is responsible for addressing three major points

- (a) approach - is the approach correct
- (b) technology - will all this stuff really work together (the salesman said it would!)
- (c) value-added - is value added to the business objective.

As a result of ISI's commitment to the new technology and strong user participation, combined with CTG's experience and client/server development process, the TPS-Integrator Functional Prototype excelled producing the following results:

- The **approach** consisted of utilization of the Client/Server Methodology (C/S Method). The methodology provided the road-map of iterative steps to be taken throughout the life of the prototype. A fast-path was created limiting the prototype life to 10 weeks. The risk of this aggressive schedule was mitigated as the project team adhered to the direction supplied by the methodology and the experience of the CTG consultants.
- Proving the **technology** corroborated value. While only two weeks into the prototype, a major technical restriction was identified forcing a refocus of the technical approach. The project team then performed a second iteration on the architectural approach. The project was successful redirected, saving an estimated three months on the full life-cycle project and hundreds of hours of unsalvageable work.
- The **value-added** provided by the prototype was clearly measurable. CTG provided ISI with various reusable components, such as; a Technical Model identifying the architectural infrastructure and framework for the entire life-cycle project, a Baseline GUI Style Guide forming the foundation for industry standard GUI development, Business and System Scoping Statement containing not only the current system scoping by the foundation for Business Reengineering both conceptual and local, Client/Server Methodology provided retractable steps for the completion of a life-cycle project, on-site GUI development training, and

mentoring resulting in a successful transfer of skills. The ISI Business Partners were so delighted with the GUI Presentation Layer's industry standard *look-and-feel*, that ISI has requested CTG to incorporate the prototype onto a lap-top computer with remote node access. Functionality providing the sales and marketing force the luxury of taking the show on the road.

CTG's blend of process and experience proved to be a good fit to assist ISI with this first major step in the Client/Server direction. CTG team consisted of:

- Project Manger (Paul Brackett, Hartford CT)
- Quality Manager, C/S Method Mentor (Rick Clay, Corporate Quality)
- Client/Server Architect (Mike Pallos, Network Management)
- Business Analyst (Susan Valette, Hartford CT)
- Graphical User Interface Designer (Joe Aown, Hartford CT consultant)

The implementation and execution of CTG's project management, quality assurance, and client/server development process were very effective in achieving a high level of customer satisfaction, while establishing strong client/server development credibility, and laying the foundation for follow-on business. Tom Budnar, Project Performance Director, of the Hartford branch is currently positioning CTG for the remainder of the project.

The synergy created by both ISI and CTG clearly created win-win scenarios for both companies. Several initiatives were underway at ISI when the functional prototype was initiated. It would have be easy for the project team to have be caught up in several tangential efforts. Proof once again that focus, experience, strong processes, and old fashion hard work are ingredients for success. I believe Ralph Waldo Emerson stated it best, "What you do speaks so loudly, I can't hear what you're saying."