



Graebel

Customer portal enables relocation provider to expand in new directions

Industry

- Transportation

Services

- Custom .NET Development
- Web Development
- Application Security
- Application Architecture

Benefits

- Reduced TCO
- Consolidated code
- Repeatable, customizable framework
- More accurate data collection and reporting
- Increased reliability and efficiency
- Greater scalability
- Ability to expand business capabilities

Key Microsoft technologies

- .NET Framework
- ASP.Net
- SQL Server 2000
- N-ORCA
- NUnit
- NAnt

Graebel Companies, Inc. is among the world's largest privately owned providers of managed relocation services. Founded in 1950, Graebel offers worldwide moving and storage services for household goods, commercial office, and special commodities, along with third-party services.

As a leading provider of managed relocation services, Graebel relies on technology to facilitate all of the details surrounding a move. By re-architecting its custom-written Web applications in Microsoft .NET, the company consolidated the code and databases to create a more manageable and scalable solution on which to run the business. This effort was supported by the EMC® Microsoft Practice team which provided custom .NET development, Web development, application security, and application architecture services.

"We were searching for a long-term partner and Microsoft led us to EMC," says Don Tarkenton, senior vice president and CIO. "We have been so impressed with the quality of the consultants they've brought us."

Challenges met

Move Management, Inc. (MMI), a subsidiary of Graebel Companies, administers the moving and storage associated with the relocation of client employees. The MMI Web application is an important enabler to this business, allowing MMI and client employees to view and edit various events regarding the move, see reports, obtain price quotes, and view billing information, among other features.

Custom written for MMI several years ago by an outside company using ASP.NET and VBScript, the MMI development staff found the MMI Web application exceedingly difficult to maintain and extend. The technology was outdated, poorly architected, used non-standard coding practices, and had little documentation. It was difficult and time-consuming to upgrade or make changes to the application, integrate it with other applications, and scale it to meet the needs of the business.

In addition, critical business functions were non-existent or unreliable and reporting was often inaccurate or did not work due to erroneous data in the database. Potentially sensitive information, such as company financial information, was also being transmitted unencrypted over the Internet due to the lack of an SSL certificate. In addition, non-English-speaking clients of MMI could not use the application.

To ease these concerns, the MMI application was heavily re-architected and re-factored. The re-factoring effort had two major phases, each culminating in a release. Throughout the process, the EMC Microsoft Practice team worked closely with the MMI development team. This engagement resulted in a transfer of knowledge that will enable the development team to better maintain and scale the system over the long haul.

The first phase stabilized the application. The second phase contained the major re-architecting work. The end result is the combination of the two code bases as well as the two databases into a single, newly remodeled database, and the migration of the application to Visual Basic.NET. It also included a few urgent feature upgrades such as a reporting subscription functionality and an evaluations mechanism.

Technology updates on the Microsoft .NET platform have given MMI a chance to inter-operate and share subsets of data, which was previously impossible to do. The MMI development team is now able to configure the system to serve particular clients controlling, for instance, what information a client has access to.

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An advantageous outcome for all

The benefits of the MMI re-architecture are many. They include: improved performance, better reporting accounts, increased ability to react to customer needs, greater reliability, increased scalability, a better data model, more efficient integration of systems, system standardization across the board onto a .NET platform, and the ability to have enterprise-level data.

Its practical usefulness is evidenced by the MMI business lenders who are no longer worrying about the application’s performance and are now using their new website as a sales tool. But the most tangible and immediate benefit for the client is the sharp reduction in time, energy, and resources spent on maintaining the MMI application. They can now focus on other projects aimed at upgrades, improvement, and growth.



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