Dell Software

Ceridian cuts SharePoint customization time with Dell

Professional services company cuts support time by 40 hours a week & implementation time by 95% with Quick Apps for SharePoint

Ceridian is a leading global professional services company that helps organizations control costs, save time, optimize their workforce, grow revenue and minimize financial risk. For an effective way to surface SQL Server data in SharePoint and quickly customize and enhance SharePoint applications, Ceridian turned to Quest Software (now a part of Dell).

Ceridian has a custom .NET system that made it easy for customers to submit work requests: the web interface guides customers through a series of questions that leads them to the appropriate project request form. In a typical year, customers submit some 27,000 requests through the system, and the data is stored in SQL Server.

To fulfill the requests, Ceridian processes the form data using SharePoint 2007. Since Business Data Catalog–the option natively to integrate SQL data into SharePoint–is available only in the Enterprise Client Access License (CAL) and Ceridian had the Standard CAL, a Ceridian developer spent about four months creating a custom process to extract the data from SQL Server and load it into SharePoint.

Unfortunately, this system required continuous bi-directional synchronization of data between SQL Server and SharePoint–and these synchronization jobs frequently failed or caused data conflicts. The result was an incessant stream of support tickets that had become draining on Ceridian's IT resources.

"In an average week, we would get five to 10 support tickets reporting that something didn't get synchronized correctly," explained Alex Balagour, Director of Business Technology at Ceridian. "Each support ticket would require about two hours of research, and for every five or 10 tickets, we would need to put in a code fix to improve the synchronization mechanism. We were spending anywhere from 10 to 15 hours

> "Before we had Quick Apps, each enhancement request ... would take at least a week to have it in production. Now, changes are configured, not coded, so ... we can have it live in a span of two hours"
>
> *Alex Balagour*
> *Director of Business Technology*

Customer profile

Company	Ceridian
Industry	Professional services & consulting
Country	United States
Employees	8,000
Website	www.ceridian.com

Challenge

Ceridian needed to surface SQL Server data in SharePoint and reduce SharePoint application development time without relying on expensive custom coding.

Solution

The organization implemented Quick Apps for SharePoint (formerly Web Parts for SharePoint), which enables you to build applications that can be easily supported, maintained and upgraded up to 80 percent faster and with no custom coding.

Benefits

- Enabled quick creation of an application to surface SQL Server data in SharePoint, eliminating the need to synchronize data between the platforms
- Reduced support time by at least 40 hours a week, cutting costs by at least 10%
- Enhanced user productivity by eliminating synchronization problems and enabling easy interface enhancements
- Reduced time for changes to be live in production by 95 percent, from a week or more to just two hours

Application areas

- Windows server management

a week just troubleshooting these issues. This time sink was costing the company roughly $500 a week just to keep the system alive, and the nonstop flow of similar issues was demoralizing to the development team, who want to spend their time on projects that add value to the company."

In addition, system enhancements were difficult to build and time-consuming to test and deploy. "Every time there was an enhancement request, it was all built with custom SharePoint event handlers or custom web parts, so quite a bit of effort was needed to make each change," Balagour said. "In addition, because we have a third party host our SharePoint, we have a very strict change management process. It would take at least a week from the moment we developed a code fix to have it be available in production."

Simplified application development

When Balagour joined Ceridian, he was already experienced with Quick Apps for SharePoint (formerly Web Parts for SharePoint). Therefore, he recognized immediately that there was an easier method of making the SQL data available in SharePoint.

Quick Apps enables you to bring data together from all of your enterprise application systems, such as SQL Server, SAP and Oracle, without the hassle of manually copying the data into SharePoint–even if you have only the standard CAL and therefore no access to the Business Data Catalog.

"My immediate thought," said Balagour, "was, couldn't we use Quick Apps to look at the SQL data in the original customer-facing application and provide our employees with an interface very similar to the SharePoint lists? We would still use SharePoint as the platform, but use Quick Apps to interface directly with the SQL data, eliminating all of our synchronization issues."

Before choosing Dell, Ceridian evaluated the alternatives, including other third-party vendors and doing nothing at all.

Quick Apps was a complete solution that would ensure a good return on investment by eliminating support calls for synchronization issues while also simplifying and accelerating SharePoint development. "With Quest, we got an enterprise solution," noted Balagour. "We can connect to Oracle, we can connect to SQL Server, we can connect to Web Services. Quick Apps gives us the enterprise building blocks that we were after, as opposed to a collection of third-party web parts from a number of vendors with each requiring its own licensing and unique configuration method."

Reduced development & support times

With Quick Apps, Ceridian was able to quickly redevelop and enhance the SharePoint application for processing customer requests stored in SQL Server. "The whole redevelopment cycle–from the moment we bought Quick Apps until the new application was released to production–was less than 90 days," reported Balagour. "In comparison, building the previous application, which required the constant synchronization, took four months."

Ceridian employees no longer suffer the disruptions and loss of productivity that synchronization issues used to cause, and support costs have dropped dramatically. "Before we had Quick Apps, we spent about 388 hours per month on support," noted Balagour. "Using Quick Apps and through other initiatives, we've cut close to 140 hours per month of support time, and easily 40 hours of that a month is due to Quick Apps."

Moreover, the development team is now able to quickly address enhancement requests and deliver a better interface for users. "Quick Apps gives us a very low-cost and low-effort opportunity to improve the experience of our employees," said Balagour.

Getting enhancements into production is also much faster and easier–a change can be available to users in a few hours instead a week. "Before we had Quick Apps, each enhancement request meant a code change, and because of our deployment process, it would take at least a week to have it in production," recalled Balagour. "Now, changes are configured, not coded, so as soon as we have a change ready and tested, we can have it live in a span of two hours."

Finally, by enabling users to configure customizations rather than coding, users outside of IT–the people who fully understand the business requirements–can now make changes themselves. "Quick Apps has reduced the skill level that's required to actually build things, so the pool of resources that we can tap to do work is broader," noted Balagour. "In particular, our business analysts–people who historically would not have done development work–now have the ability to quickly piece something together to satisfy their needs."

About Dell

Dell Inc. (NASDAQ: DELL) listens to customers and delivers worldwide innovative technology, business solutions and services they trust and value. For more information, visit www.dell.com.

View all Dell case studies at dell.com/casestudies

Dell Software
5 Polaris Way, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656 | www.dell.com
If you are located outside North America, you can find local office information on our Web site.

© 2012 Dell, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Dell, Dell Software, the Dell Software logo and products—as identified in this document—are registered trademarks of Dell, Inc. in the U.S.A. and/or other countries. All other trademarks and registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.

CaseStudy-Ceridian-US-VG-2012-12-12