



Solution Overview

Company Size: 30

Industries

- Advertising and media sales

Needs

- Customer relationship
- Enterprise integration

Technologies

- Microsoft .Net Framework
- Microsoft SQL Server
- DotNetNuke
- Training Partner

Benefits

- Improved product quality
- Increased agility
- Improved security
- Reduced complexity

The Center for Sales Strategy (CSS)

Case Study

“Very responsive ... flat out know their stuff ... good team of people to call upon. We have enjoyed our association with ovionx and expect to work with them for quite some time to come.”

— John Henley
COO – The Center for Sales Strategy

The Center for Sales Strategy (CSS), established in 1983, is a consulting and training firm specializing in the needs of media, advertising, and marketing sales organizations. CSS helps its clients develop Sales management, Salespeople, and Sales.

Products and services

Microsoft .Net Framework

The .NET Framework is Microsoft's comprehensive and consistent programming model for building applications that has visually stunning user experiences, seamless and secure communication, and the ability to model a range of business processes.

Microsoft SQL Server

Microsoft SQL Server is a comprehensive, integrated data management and analysis software that enables organizations to reliably manage mission-critical information and confidently run today's increasingly complex business applications.

DotNetNuke

DotNetNuke® is the most widely adopted open source framework for website content management and web application development on Microsoft ASP.NET. DotNetNuke has been downloaded over 6,000,000 times, is in use on over 400,000 production websites, has a thriving user community, and features a huge array of available third-party extensions.

Training Partner

Training Partner is a global solution developed by Geometrix that streamlines registration, scheduling, and reporting. Training Partner was designed for the administration of blended learning and fully supports both instructor-led training and elearning for commercial, corporate and government clients.

Business Situation

As a result of their continued success and growth, The Center for Sales Strategy (CSS) was seeking to re-evaluate their IT infrastructure. CSS wanted to leverage emerging technologies to achieve operational efficiencies and help them manage their growth, improve their corporate web presence, and enhance their online learning offerings.

CSS offers a number of online programs that complement their sales and marketing consulting services. These programs were originally designed as a convenient alternative for those clients in the field who could not attend training events. While the content was exclusively offered to CSS clients, CSS soon realized that there was a demand for this high-value content and decided to make it a public offering as well. The increased success of the programs prompted CSS to re-evaluate the functionality of the application used to deliver these programs. Specifically, their concerns included scalability, flexibility, and standardization of the course content.

Furthermore, CSS has always been at the leading edge of technology and so they were seeking to extend or enhance their website to showcase examples of web technologies that could be useful to their clients in their own marketing efforts.

Technical Situation

After a detailed review, it was clear to CSS that they could take advantage of advances in web portal technology.

Their existing site was developed as a collection of static web pages with very limited data-driven functionality. Managing content on the site was cumbersome and expensive both in terms of time and expense since changes, in many cases, had to be implemented by a web designer or developer. Furthermore, CSS has an extensive library of documents exclusively available to their clients. Managing this library was proving to be unmanageable and inconsistent since there was no centralization of the documents, often resulting in outdated documents and content being made available to their clients.

Another challenge facing CSS was the need to mitigate the amount of duplicate effort managing their client information. Several CSS staff members were maintaining a series of lists used for a variety of objectives. Among these objectives was notifying clients at various levels in the organization, sending certificates of completion for their online learning offerings, and general reporting to management. The duplication of effort was creating a number of independent data silos, frequently containing irreconcilable information.

Additionally, the web application used to serve their online programs was designed as a tightly coupled application with no separation between content and delivery. This approach was severely compromising flexibility in content authoring as well as limiting extensibility. Increasingly, the complexity of the content itself impacted the delivery mechanism. The opposite was true when making

modifications to the content delivery mechanism since the delivered functionality of one program could impact another.

Solution

CSS recognized that an integrated approach would greatly benefit the organization. The solution was to implement a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) approach. This approach consists of loosely coupled functions, programs, or resources that are integrated to maximize their utility. Delivering a unified, consistent, and convenient way of accessing information would help staff to achieve their business objectives easily and consistently. The two major goals of this approach are agility and faster accessibility to pertinent information. Integrating components proven useful to CSS into a dashboard approach meant that staff would not have to cross-train in different platforms but use a single interface that everyone was familiar with.

The solution needed to facilitate a centralized approach to managing access and user information. This centralized data source would be able to better handle security in a consistent manner and control which resources the user can access, how much access, and for how long. Additionally, user information would be consistent across all areas of the system. After a considerable requirements gathering process, CSS felt that a custom solution, later labeled the Global Data Store (GDS), was the preferred approach. This

approach would give them greater leverage in customization or adaptation to just about any future application integration.

CSS found the open source communities had a lot to offer. Open source software is software for which the source code and certain other rights are in the public domain. This permits users to use and change the software. CSS decided to implement the DotNetNuke platform, the most widely adopted open source framework for website content management and web application development on Microsoft ASP.NET. The extensibility of this platform made it easy to integrate other programs and business processes and make them available from the Web. This approach made it possible to integrate the document library into the platform and help ensure that the available content was up-to-date. The modular approach the platform provides opened the doors to a large number of third-party vendors offering a wide range of functionality and applications. These commercially available applications are easy to implement into the platform and are reasonably priced.

A detailed review of the existing online learning platform revealed that it was simply not feasible to extend or modify the platform without an extensive and expensive overhaul. Advances in online learning technology and the growing Learning Management Systems (LMS) industry have

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widened the options in out-of-the-box LMS vendors. CSS decided to start a vendor selection process and, after careful review, selected Training Partner, a highly extensible LMS developed by GeoMetrix. The package was integrated and implemented as part of the overall architecture.

Benefits

Improved product quality

By ensuring their exclusive content is up-to-date, CSS is providing more value to their clients. Content exclusivity is a big part of the CSS value proposition. Their clients place a high-value on the kind of information CSS provides; it provides them with insight and a competitive advantage.

Increased agility

By implementing this custom solution, CSS is able to produce and publish content twice as fast. The mechanisms embedded into the new Content Management System (CMS) make posting content much easier and efficient. The need to depend on a developer or web designer to constantly update or manage their content is nearly zero.

Improved security

The new integrated approach gives CSS the ability to address security and authorization in a unified manner. Administration of multiple systems introduces potential security risks. A unified approach to security

ensures consistency across all applications.

Reduced complexity

The administration of the increasing number and complexity of the systems CSS had in place was reduced dramatically. The new system is simpler and more integrated resulting in a reduction of time and costs associated with administering these systems.