State-of-the-Art Credit Union Operations Software Built on Windows Vista® Displaces Entrenched UNIX System

Overview

Region: Puerto Rico
Industry: Credit Union Software

Customer Profile
Puerto Rico contains 132 credit unions of varying sizes that provide banking services to the country's diverse citizens.

Partner Profile
Visuales Caribe develops software to manage integrated front and back office operations for Puerto Rico's credit unions.

Business Situation
Visuales Caribe needed to quickly and efficiently develop a more intelligent and user-friendly application that credit unions could use to attract new members. Visuales Caribe was also looking for a solution that would displace their competitor's UNIX-based offering.

Solution
Visuales Caribe developed new credit union operations software on the Windows Vista platform, delivering the first Certified for Windows Vista solution in Latin America.

Benefits
- Gained significant credibility with customers as the provider of a Certified for Windows Vista solution
- Delivered products and services to market faster, helping customers attract new members and a younger, tech-savvy demographic
- Displaced competitor's application by showing the advantages of moving from a UNIX to a Microsoft environment
- Accelerated sales cycles by demonstrating state-of-the-art Windows Vista-based mobile and tablet PC technologies

Product Solution Items
Windows Vista

> "Our product being the first Certified for Windows Vista solution has given us more credibility in the eyes of our existing and future customers. This is an important point for us, considering that we are breaking into a market that has been controlled for almost two decades by a single vendor with a completely UNIX-based product."
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> Franklin J. Alier López de Haro, President of Systems Development, Visuales Caribe

Visuales Caribe is one of only two companies offering software to help Puerto Rico's 132 credit unions manage operations and automate workflows throughout the front and back office. A Microsoft partner for more than four years, Visuales Caribe gained knowledge of the Windows Vista operating system through early adoption programs and developed the first Certified for Windows Vista solution in Latin America. The solution, available since February of 2007, is helping credit unions aggressively pursue Puerto Rico's young, professional market segment with new state-of-the-art solutions, while helping Visuales Caribe displace their competitor's entirely UNIX-based product.

Situation

Puerto Rico's credit unions play a significant role in the lives of their customers. Members of these credit unions are considered part owners, and ownership brings with it considerable security and a sense of belonging. The country's credit unions range in size and have diverse clientele—urban credit unions typically have many offices to serve professionals in the country's major cities, while rural credit unions have fewer branches but count tens of thousands of farmers and small business owners as clients.

The majority of credit union members in Puerto Rico are over the age of 50. In order to increase membership, credit unions are looking for a solution that helps them attract a younger, more technology-savvy clientele. The credit unions recognize that their target market doesn't have the patience of previous generations and is more likely to choose a credit union that provides faster, more user-friendly service.

As a Microsoft Certified Partner, Visuales Caribe provides software to help Puerto Rico's credit unions manage operations such as opening a checking account, soliciting a loan, or processing a mortgage application. Its software encompasses both front and back office activities into a single, seamless system, and manages both simple and complex workflows throughout the credit union environment. While Visuales Caribe is a strong player in this market, it is competing against a competitor who has served the same market for more than two decades with a one-size-fits-all, UNIX-based solution.

The company's competitor forces credit unions to adapt their processes to pre-determined workflows included in their application, making it difficult for the credit unions to customize their services to the needs of their diverse clientele. Visuales Caribe knew it could displace this competitor by offering a solution that better mirrored the unique processes found at each credit union. Specifically, it wanted to create a smarter application that could more closely follow the customers' existing, natural workflows, such as the unique way they might process a loan application. Visuales Caribe knew a more flexible solution could also help credit unions create better services to attract a younger professional market segment.

Having the ability to customize the software solution for each client required a dynamic platform with innovative development tools. This would enable Visuales Caribe to quickly and efficiently create a more intelligent and user-friendly application that credit unions could use to attract new members. In doing so, Visuales Caribe also saw an opportunity to displace the competition.

Solution

Involvement in Microsoft early adoption programs helped Visuales Caribe to see the potential of new tools available in Windows Vista, such as the Windows Presentation Foundation, and innovative development tools like the Microsoft® .NET 3.0 Framework. Confident that these tools would help to create a more intelligent and user-friendly solution in less time, Visuales Caribe quickly made the decision to build its application on the Windows Vista platform.

The development team at Visuales Caribe built its credit union operations software for use on Windows Vista, and based the solution on Microsoft technologies including Windows Server® 2003, Microsoft SQL Server™ 2005, Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server 2007, Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, and the 2007 Microsoft Office system. The new product, made available in February 2007, uses the Windows Presentation Foundation and Windows Workflow Foundation to enhance the user experience and the aesthetics of the user interface.

The Windows Presentation Foundation let Visuales Caribe quickly make changes to its software's user interface, something that would have taken much longer in the Visual Basic® or C# programming languages. Visuales Caribe could now deliver new products and services to market with less turnaround time, helping its customers generate business results more quickly. Graphical tools in Windows Vista also enabled Visuales Caribe to easily customize workflows for each client. Windows Workflow Foundation presented workflows to the credit unions in an intuitive format, anticipating their actions to present the correct information for the task at hand. This improved user experience helped differentiate Visuales Caribe from the competition.

Visuales Caribe now also offers new, innovative solutions to credit unions that helps them more effectively target the young, professional market segment. Using Visuales Caribe software built on Windows Vista, credit unions can now run innovative campaigns at schools or factories where they use mobile technology to sign up members on the spot. The software allows credit unions to not only gather prospect demographics, but also to contact the

For More Information

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central office remotely and immediately submit the application and obtain approval for a loan.

Another state-of-the-art product Visuales Caribe offers clients is an ultra-portable tablet PC running its Windows Vista-based software application. This one-of-a-kind product enables credit unions to access and manipulate client information from anywhere on the island while maintaining a real-time connection with main office systems. Employees can initiate a loan, obtain a signature from a client, even take the client's picture from any location, and have the information immediately appear at the main office.

Ease of use for developers, available developer toolsets, and a comprehensive knowledge base are just a few of the reasons Windows Vista helps Visuales Caribe stay ahead of the competition. With its Certified for Windows Vista solution, Visuales Caribe can easily demonstrate the advantages of moving away from UNIX-based software to its clients. It is on the path to becoming a market leader in the Puerto Rican credit union market and throughout Latin America.

Benefits

In the fall of 2007, Visuales Caribe was featured in a credit union-focused newsletter that highlighted how it is partnering with Microsoft to bring new technology solutions to customers. Highlights include the mobile technology, which allows credit union employees and their members to view account details and history, approve payments, and even transfer funds right from their cell phones. The newsletter is driving a significant number of leads for the company and attracting the young, tech-savvy professional market that the credit unions are looking to capture. In fact, Visuales Caribe doubled its clientele in less than a year after becoming Certified for Windows Vista. Other benefits Visuales Caribe has experienced from its Microsoft partnership include:

Enhanced Market Credibility
Visuales Caribe was able to get its software Certified for Windows Vista. As the first independent software vendor (ISV) in Latin America to achieve this status, the company gained significant credibility with its customers. The logo differentiates applications from competitors' applications and gives customers confidence that the product offers a lower total cost of ownership.

Faster Time to Market
Building on the Microsoft platform allows Visuales Caribe to develop new solutions and services for its customers quickly and efficiently, and allows credit unions to take advantage of new capabilities in Windows Vista to improve their business. As a Certified Microsoft Partner, Visuales Caribe is able to gain early access to new software and features, further accelerating its ability to deliver cutting-edge products and services to market.

Accelerated Sales Cycles
Visuales Caribe has been able to use Windows Vista to get credit union prospects and customers excited. During sales opportunities, representatives can run an entire credit union environment right from their laptops and demonstrate the capabilities live during the sales call. Instead of using a presentation, Visuales Caribe salespeople pull out their cell phones and transfer money right in front of the prospect. These new features have accelerated sales cycles and helped Visuales Caribe close more deals.

Windows Vista

Windows Vista can help your organization use information technology to gain a competitive advantage in today's new world of work. Your employees will be able to find and use information more effectively. You will be able to support your mobile workforce with better access to shared data and collaboration tools. And your IT staff will have better tools and technologies to enhance corporate IT security and data protection and experience more efficient deployment and management.

Certified for Windows Vista

To help you take full advantage of developing software solutions on the Windows Vista platform, Microsoft has created a dual-track logo program: Certified for Windows Vista and Works with Windows Vista. The Works with Windows Vista program tells customers that your current Windows XP products provide baseline compatibility with Windows Vista. The Certified for Windows Vista program lets customers know that your product delivers the highest-quality Windows Vista experience.

For more information about Windows Vista, go to: www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/

For more information about the Certified for Windows Vista Logo Program, go to: www.innovateonwindowsvista.com