

Fair-Rite Products Improves their E-commerce Experience with RPGsp

Case Study Highlights

- **Company:** Fair-Rite Products
- **Industry:** Manufacturing
- **Business Challenge:** Customers had a hard time searching and downloading the company's product catalog, which was in PDF format
- **Solutions:** Rapid website development toolset enabled Fair-Rite to successfully create an online product catalog, track sales and production, and build a real-time business model

About Fair-Rite

Previously, Fair-Rite allowed their customers to download their entire product catalog as a PDF directly from their website, but there were difficulties. The file was so large that customers complained about the inability to easily search the information and the amount of time it took to download the catalog from the site.

New Catalog Based on Previous Skills

Using RPGsp, Fair-Rite was able to leverage its existing resources by utilizing their programmers' current knowledge of RPG and the iSeries server. The efficient use of expertise allowed Fair-Rite to save valuable time and money in developing their online product catalog.

Development of the catalog began in August of 2007 by the Fair-Rite team led by Steve Fordenbacher, senior systems analyst with Fair-Rite Products Corporation, and was completed only five months later in January of 2008. The bulk of the time was spent improving interface design and navigation, as well as creating a user-friendly e-commerce site and a protocol for the site's question and answer section.

User Friendly And Efficient

During the installation process, Fair-Rite easily configured their iSeries server with the aid of RPGsp's prompts. Once installed, Fair-Rite was able to easily transform any of their user's green screens into fully functioning Web applications. "With RPGsp, we are able to generate the data dynamically. RPGsp has decreased our modernization time by eliminating a lot of the nonsense that takes too much time and energy," says Fordenbacher. "With the RPGsp tool you are able to focus on the important parts such as the users' experience."

Additionally, Fordenbacher was pleased to find that RPGsp not only converted all of their user's applications without extra effort, but also included intuitive enhancements such as dynamic graphs, database-driven drop-downs, pop-up calendars, and much more for their converted screens. Fordenbacher appreciates RPGsp's streamlined approach for managing details. "For example, you can use cookies and not have to know, recall, or keep track of all the little details because RPGsp takes care of the encoding and decoding."

"With RPGsp, we are able to generate the data dynamically. RPGsp has decreased our modernization time by eliminating a lot of the nonsense that takes too much time and energy. With the RPGsp tool you are able to focus on the important parts such as the user's experience."

Steve Fordenbacher
Senior Systems Analyst, Fair-Rite

Powerful Features Provide Sure-fire Help

Within 30 minutes of downloading RPGsp, Fair-Rite had the program up and running. "We used the wizards and updated the data through Web browsers very quickly," says Fordenbacher. "The total flow of updating records from the database was shorter and easier to maintain."

"By using RPGsp, I was able to quickly create applications to control our files, all in a matter of minutes," Fordenbacher noted. "RPGsp is at least 50 to 75 percent more efficient at Web development compared to our previous attempts to modernize the catalog. RPGsp keeps you from wasting time because it handles the minutia so you can spend more time on the important task of creating a better application for the users."

RPGsp's integration with debugging on the iSeries has proven exceptional and easy to use. "Profound Logic did an excellent job of creating a seamless debugging tool," says Fordenbacher. "We can see exactly what is happening with the program and easily fix any problems."

"Profound Logic has a very good vision for what a systems analyst wants. You don't get the feeling it's a dead tool," Fordenbacher comments. "We are very impressed that it works when you install it and if you need something, odds are, Profound Logic has already thought of it."

Fordenbacher also has high-praise for the customer support from Profound Logic Software. "When you call Profound Logic support you are speaking directly with a person who understands the program and can provide immediate help," says Fordenbacher.

Improving Customer Service

Customers can now readily log-on 24/7 to the My Fair-Rite e-commerce site and review orders, view shipping status, and reprint documents – information they previously would have only had access to during business hours via a phone call to customer service.

Fair-Rite customers are able to easily search for a specific part along with its support documentation. This self-service system saves time for both Fair-Rite staff and customers.

When customers do have additional questions they can rely on Captain Fair-Rite to help them out. Captain Fair-Rite, an application officially known as 'Ask the Advisor', was developed by Fordenbacher with the aid of RPGsp. Customers need only to click on the button titled 'Ask the Advisor', and the application opens a small information window with a debonair superhero (complete with blue tights) sitting at a desk. If the customer clicks on the button again, a form window opens where they can submit their questions and even attach related files. Once the forms have been filled out and submitted they are then routed to the application engineer to respond to the questions.

"Since incorporating the 'Ask the Advisor' application, we have seen an increase in the quantity of questions and feel it is having a positive impact on our sales and customer service," relates Fordenbacher.

Turning Service into Sales

Additionally, Fair-Rite created a dashboard using the RPGsp tool to track production, monthly contract sales, incoming orders, shipping, and backorders. They also track their customers' product queries in real time to determine if they need to increase production. The dashboard gives Fair-Rite a real time view of the health of the company.

The information gathered from the website is shared with their sales force to improve customer service and sales. This new real time business model has resulted in increased sales even with the downturn in the market.

"Fair-Rite's sales are up from last year. Our new website is so much easier to use that our customers are staying longer," says Patrick H. Carr, director of Information Services for Fair-Rite Products Corp. "Our Web logs are now a very useful information resource for us to see why customers are visiting us, the pages being viewed, and the length of time customers are utilizing our site. We are very pleased with the results RPGsp has helped us to achieve."

With the aid of RPGsp, Fair-Rite has improved customer service and increased their bottom line. "We are very impressed with how Profound Logic Software did it and we use the RPGsp tool a lot," says Fordenbacher. "Technically speaking – Profound Logic has their act together."