

Western Power Sports Serves Up a Powerful New IBM i E-commerce Solution

Case Study Highlights

- **Company:** Western Power Sports
- **Industry:** Wholesaler and distributor of power sports parts and accessories
- **Business Challenge:** Outgrew existing e-commerce solution; needed a flexible, rapid and easy-to-use solution to replace it
- **Solutions:** Profound's modernization solutions enabled Western Power Sports to quickly, and easily, deliver a powerful new e-commerce site that resulted in a 500% increase in online sales

About Western Power Sports

With a huge quantity of products online, Western Power Sports quickly outgrew their former, very limited, web solution. As the company continued to grow, the Western Power Sports IT team needed a solution that would provide flexibility, ease of use, and a fast production pace when building new websites that used their existing IBM i (AS/400) platform. They found their solution with our RPGsp product.

The Problem

In 2000, the Western Power Sports' IT team determined there was an urgent need to move to a web solution that could seamlessly tie in with their existing System i platform. At that time, the team installed and experimented with three different products. "We didn't have the time or ability at that point to develop our own solution," says Cummings. "What we were looking for was a company to sell us a product and also provide a solution they could support." But the learning curve for most products was extreme, requiring multiple week-long training sessions just to get started using the product.

After months of tedious development, Cummings and his team launched the Western Power Sports website using one of the popular products on the market. WPS used this solution for some years, but quickly outgrew the product. Cummings and his team decided to go back to the drawing board and tried two other widely advertised solutions, but became frustrated with them and gave up. If a better solution was to be implemented, it would have to be a customized one, possibly costing the company hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"Just when Western Power Sports was about to outsource all of its web development instead of spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on yet another solution that we were not sure would work properly, one of my programmers suggested that I attend a demonstration of Profound Logic's RPGsp solution," explained Cummings.

At first, Cummings was hesitant to look at yet another demonstration. Several attempts at using other, similar solutions had already wasted a lot of time and money. A month later, Cummings decided to give Profound Logic a try. "I wasn't even halfway through the demonstration when I decided this product is better than anything we had previously used, or attempted to use. What impressed me was the ease of use and how straightforward the product was; I didn't get bogged down in a lot of extra things like I did with our previous solution." Cummings explained that the product they used previously was not really suitable for their fast-growing enterprise, and for what they wanted to do with the Western Power Sports websites.

Cummings wanted a product just like Profound Logic's RPGsp. One that would allow him to start coding and designing a website right away and would provide an intuitive interface with the ability to immediately see results. "After Profound Logic sent me the information I needed to get started, the Western Power Sports IT team had it up and running in about an hour," says Cummings. "With our previous solution it would have taken a full week of me working on the product along with their team just to get a website online that still had no real functionality."

The Solution

RPGsp is Profound Logic's award-winning rapid Web development environment that provides a fast track to extending existing legacy programs or developing new applications for System i users. Comparing it to the product they used at that time, Cummings developed a fully functioning "salesman-like" intranet solution as a demonstration to show to the management team. The best part – it only took a few weeks to develop a demonstration that led to a full implementation after being approved by management.

"I had never touched HTML prior to using RPGsp. All I had to do was use the available wizards and then view the output and see how it functioned – that's how I learned the system so quickly," says Cummings. "Within the first four weeks the product did everything we needed it to do. Since then, I have learned HTML extensively even though a user only needs to utilize the RPGsp built-in wizards." After the initial few weeks of using the wizards, Cummings' IT team was able to modify the code extensively and customize it to Western Power Sports' specific needs. Now WPS runs six websites using RPGsp.

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Rody Cummings
IT Director, Western Power Sports

The Results

Two people develop and maintain Western Power Sports' six websites on a part-time basis. That is because RPGsp does not require full-time maintenance due to its ease of use and friendly, rapid development wizards. Western Power Sports now generates \$250,000 a day from the six websites running on RPGsp. Cummings explained a 500% increase in sales moving from their old product to RPGsp. "Prior to RPGsp, with the previous product, we generated only 10% of our sales online. Now with RPGsp in place, 50% of our sales come over the Internet with approximately 150,000 visitors, over one million page views, and 17,000 orders on a monthly basis."

WPS receives compliments on their websites every day. Customers describe how fast the system processes orders and how easy it is to place an order. One programmer in the Western Power Sports IT department developed a series of tests comparing RPGsp running on System i with a MySQL, ODBC, PHP solution. The programmer developed the page on an Intel server and then developed the same page using RPGsp. "It turns out that RPGsp was 50-100% faster than the Intel solution running MySQL, ODBC, and PHP," says Cummings. "And the performance tests we did showed that the performance of the old solution was not even close to the performance of our RPGsp solution."

The Support

True support, the kind you get when a company cares about its customers, shows in everything Profound Logic represents. Cummings describes Profound Logic's support as terrific and exceptional. "Since I have been working with Profound Logic, they have never pointed their fingers at anyone else when an issue occurs. Other solutions point fingers at IBM; they say it's IBM's fault. Profound Logic is always willing to work through things with us to find a solution."

Having been in the industry since 1982, Cummings feels more strongly about Profound Logic's RPGsp product and its support than any other product he has used over the years. "I usually do not endorse a product like this, but Profound Logic's RPGsp does everything they say it's going to do. When a product works as well as Profound Logic's does, I want to put my name on it. In fact, I can go as far as saying it's the best all around solution in the software industry for the System i.

Putting It All Together

Profound Logic's RPGsp product provided an ideal solution for Western Power Sports because it complemented their IT staff and resources. Philip Roestamadji, Marketing Director of Profound Logic, says "With RPGsp, Western Power Sports' IT department did not need to retrain their staff and were able to use existing business logic." The IT department took advantage of all the tools and wizards available in RPGsp, which helped them speed up development.

Other solutions make users learn new languages or proprietary technologies, which creates a steep learning curve for users. RPGsp, on the other hand, make it easier for developers by allowing them to code in the system's native language – RPG. RPGsp's use of native languages also has additional benefits such as increased application performance, and better reuse of existing business logic and code.

RPGsp is a very easy product to use right out of the box. The installation process automatically guides you through every step including configuring HTTP server instances on your system and creating new server profiles. "This whole process usually only takes a few minutes and your environment is ready to go," says Roestamadji. From there on, you can easily start coding or you can make use of a wizard to instantly create an application in just a few seconds with only a few clicks of the mouse."