Winsupply Gets WISE to Mobile IBM i (AS/400) Applications

Case Study Highlights

- **Company:** WinWholesale
- **Industry:** Manufacturing & Distributing
- **Business Challenge:** Sales team was unable to access real-time customer and product information while working remotely
- **Solutions:** Genie and mobile development services enable WinWholesale to create a mobile version of their WISE sales application for the iPad

About Winsupply

Winsupply, a long-time IBM i customer, realized that it was time to update their in-house ERP solution. Not only did they want to create a modern, Web-based interface for the application, they wanted to create a mobile version that their users could access on an iPad and wireless connection.

The Problem

When your organization is made up of multiple supply groups, more than 520 wholesale companies, and dozens of showrooms nationwide, your business tools have to be robust and scalable enough to meet that demand. Winsupply is a long-time user of the IBM i platform for that very reason. And through an ERP system developed in-house by Winsupply's IT team, employees can enter and manage customer data, sales quotes, order history and more. This system, Wholesalers Information Services Executive (or WISE), connects the entire organization to the vital business information they need, when they need it.

While impressive, the system wasn't without drawbacks. "Our employees would ask us why we were still using old green screen applications in the year 2012," says Rick Welage, Director of IT Applications for Winsupply. "It made us look out of touch with new technologies, which is not the impression we wanted to give our customers." Another challenge Rick and his team of 20 IT specialists and RPG application developers faced was to make WISE a portable solution for their workers on the road or on-site with clients. "It is possible to access WISE while out in the field with a laptop," says Rick. "But our associates were getting tired of carrying bulky, heavy laptops while on the road and meeting with customers – definitely not the best way to access information from WISE on-the-fly."

His team began evaluating ISV tools for the IBM i that both modernized green screen applications and supported mobile development. The ideal solution would put WISE at the fingertips of anyone with an iPad and connect their field associates to company data from any location with a wireless connection. "We looked at a few solutions that claimed to do what we were looking for, but they didn't offer the right combination of tools, services and support we knew we needed with this project," Rick says. "We found the right partner with Profound Logic Software."

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> **Director of IT Applications, Winsupply**

The Solution

After joining forces, the development teams for both companies agreed the best solution for Winsupply's project would be Profound Logic's Genie product. Genie is a 5250 web-enablement solution that provides on-the-fly modernization for companies who want a modern alternative to outdated green screen applications. Additionally, Genie can be used to mobile-enable applications, which is just what Winsupply was looking for.

Because custom coding was involved, Winsupply and Profound Logic worked closely throughout the project development and rollout. "To make WISE fully functional on the iPad, additional development was needed to support the touch interface on the tablet, as well as the function keys and searchable fields in WISE," explains Rick. "With Profound Logic's help we were able to clear these hurdles."

Rick's team also developed a browser-based, self-service application where Winsupply employees can enroll for the new 'WISE on iPad' application. "With the self-registration application, users can enter their information and receive the files necessary to get started with WISE on iPad," says Rick. "Our IT team is then able to track their sessions and easily identify any problems associated with the user's account, if necessary."

The Results

By summer 2012, around 230 Win Group employees at about 150 local companies have been piloting WISE in the field – during sales calls, on the road and at home. The iPad interface enables them to quickly access account information and answer customer questions while on site. "WISE on iPad helped me with pricing a job right in front of a customer," says one happy Winsupply employee. "I was also able to check stock and correct a data entry mistake we made. Normally I would have to go back to the office and then get back to my customer."

In addition to making Winsupply's "Road Warriors" more efficient and connected, WISE on iPad shows the organization's commitment to finding modern solutions to today's business needs. "With WISE on iPad, our end users know that Winsupply will give them the right tools to be successful," explains Rick.

And the work doesn't stop there. With the encouragement of Winsupply's upper management, there are many possibilities on the horizon for ways they can extend the value of their applications on IBM i, and they look to Profound Logic as a partner through that process. "When we selected Profound Logic to work with us on this project, we were looking for more than a low price-point," says Rick. "We were looking for a company who could be a strategic partner. The price point combined with the quality of their products and the dedication of their services team made choosing Profound Logic an easy decision."