



Insurance Company Builds Case Management System Using Third Party WindowsForm Controls

Automobile Insurers Bureau

Location

Massachusetts USA

Products Used

ComponentOne Studio Enterprise (includes Studio for WinForms)

ComponentOne Doc-To-Help

Summary

With a year's worth of backlogged case management reports, the Automobile Insurers Bureau was faced with an outsourced development project failure and was without an automated Case Management system. The company turned to ComponentOne Studio for WinForms, a suite of 60+ .NET controls and ComponentOne Doc-To-Help, a Help-authoring solution to create a new automated system in six weeks; the same project that the outsourced party wasn't able to accomplish in ten months.

Business Needs

The Automobile Insurers Bureau (AIB) has been the auto insurance industry's service bureau in Massachusetts since 1925, through the "Fix and Establish" era, and now in the "Managed Competition" era. They are a service organization for Personal and Commercial Auto, offering rating, rules and forms support, and actuarial, legal and regulatory services for over 270 member companies.

In 2007, the AIB began to plan for the removal of their mainframe computer in October 2008. One of the systems that needed to be replaced was the mainframe-base case management system. "In March 2008 we found a company with experience in case management systems that promised us a working system including conversion in 3 months," said Ira Dobrow, application manager at AIB of Massachusetts.

"We were going to pay \$30,000 for the tailored application. When they failed to deliver after 10 months, some three months after we pulled the plug on the mainframe, we decided to do it ourselves. The new system had to be available quickly, ready to use by our field office personnel and able to be maintained by a limited staff."

Solution

AIB purchased Studio Enterprise from ComponentOne, a Microsoft Visual Studio Industry Partner—which combines all of the ComponentOne custom controls for Windows, Web, and Mobile application development into to a single suite of controls. They opted to create an application based on a simple three tier design: a Windows Forms application that talks to Web Services on a middle tier and communicates with a SQL Server database on the back end. It was the analysis capabilities of ComponentOne FlexGrid and the layout and error handling ingenuity of ComponentOne InputPanel that resonated as specific ComponentOne advantages for AIB. They made big use of the spell-checking capabilities and the flexible tooltips as well, even though AIB had not known these were included.

"We would not have been able to embark on this application without the ComponentOne controls," said Ira Dobrow. "Our in-house staff was able to roll out the first phase in six weeks using a number of the ComponentOne WinForms controls including TrueDBGrid, InputPanel, Sizer, DynamicHelp and FlexGrid. Together, we were able to do more in six weeks than the out-sourced party could do in ten months."



Solution (continued)

By taking advantage of many of the export options available with TrueDBGrid, such as Excel and PDF, AIB eliminated the development time costs typically associated with this task. "TrueDBGrid really became my "go to" grid because it offered so many features out of the box," said Dobrow.

When it came to entering data AIB used ComponentOne InputPanel and with it took advantage of the automatic alignment and breaks InputPanel inserts around the controls for a nice looking form every time. "We were able to spend very little time drawing forms and almost all of our time determining the logic and rules behind the form. When it was necessary, it was easy to adjust the InputPanel controls manually using the Design Time editor," said Dobrow.

The ComponentOne Sizer control allowed AIB to easily expand and collapse sections of the form. This kind of functionality is like a "space saver" where there is content, whether it be buttons, text, data, etc, that doesn't need to be visible 100% of the time. It's efficient to hide it when not needed.

AIB's technical communicator has found on the documentation side, Doc-To-Help very easy to use and the users like the .chm interface, finding it easy to navigate and search. "When the user presses F1 we simply display the Help content in its own window," said Dobrow. "We can dynamically display the correct page of the Help because this has been communicated by the application. Through this approach we get the benefit of Help context sensitivity loading in a separate window."

Benefits

In using the ComponentOne WinForms controls along with Microsoft Visual Studio, AIB created an automated Case Management system that managed employee workloads, allowed users to enter year's worth of backlog in a month, and produced reports for external stakeholders in real time.

Dobrow shared that one of the big advantages of the Studio for WinForms suite is that it can serve as a roadmap for an inexperienced development team. "We used InputPanel because it had many features that we liked, including the support for data binding, multiple types of controls, and an easy-to-use error provider," said Dobrow.

The ComponentOne sample library with source code showed AIB the path to an excellent solution and saved them from the frustrating experience of discovering their limitations without the Studio for WinForms control suite.

Prior to using the analyzing (subtotals) features of C1FlexGrid, AIB produced and distributed a Microsoft Word attachment through email that was produced manually by combining Microsoft Access reports produced using an application extract, which took half a day. Now with C1FlexGrid, the standard information, plus flexibility, is available to users whenever they want it in real time.

Quarterly and annual reports to stakeholders were created in much the same way and would take a day to compile. This information is now available online and will take minutes to compile because of C1FlexGrid. An additional advantage is that most of the special requests for "counts" by management, customers, and the press can now be answered by manipulating the information in C1FlexGrid.

"We wouldn't have dared to attempt this project without the ComponentOne tools and could not have met the requirements on our own," said Dobrow. "The AIB user community went from being wary of the undertaking to being completely sold and by having the application in house, rather than out-sourced. Plus, our responsiveness is much better and there are no direct maintenance fees to be paid."

