

Smooth Sailing for Saint Lucia Air and Sea Ports Authority using BlueFinity's mv.NET

BlueFinity International has been providing leading-edge software development tools to the MultiValue database and Microsoft .NET developer communities for nearly five years. The extensive range of features provided by these tools underpin many hundreds of diverse MultiValue-based applications throughout the world. When Ideal Business Services Ltd. needed a solution to bring their customer's systems online, they looked to the power of BlueFinity's mv.NET.

Ideal Business Services Ltd. is a UK-based IT solutions company with over 20 years experience in developing and supporting tracking and control solutions for various logistics industries. They support clients across the United Kingdom and Ireland, Europe, Scandinavia and other parts of the world. Each application they produce is developed and tailored to each customer's exact needs. One such customer is the Saint Lucia Air and Sea Ports Authority (SLASPA).

SLASPA is responsible for running the Caribbean island's two principal seaports, Castries and Vieux Fort, and the George FL Charles and Hewanorra International Airports, as well as the smaller points of entry: Soufriere, Marigot and Rodney Bay Marina. Its mandate is defined as the provision of coordinated and integrated systems of airports and seaports.

Until recently, statistical information for SLASPA's airports was maintained locally in each of the islands two locations. The original setup had become obsolete, as information was not shared correctly between the airports causing reporting inaccuracies. Tourist manifests for the thirteen to fourteen daily flights into

the island's international airport were entered manually into a spreadsheet and sent to the head office. The local airport in the north had even more daily flights as it served as the inter-island connection, but their location had no statistical reporting at all as there was a problem with their copy of the database.

In order to provide accurate, consistent reporting of all aircraft and passenger movements to the Government Council, SLASPA needed a solution which would provide real-time updates from their port management information system. The only available option was to build a secure web portal where SLASPA employees could input statistical information and allow real-time reporting for government authorities. SLASPA investigated alternatives, but because of the specialized nature, there were no off-the-shelf packages available.

At the time, Paul Parkinson of Ideal Business Services was busy working to upgrade SLASPA's existing port management information system to capture data on its cargo, and container handling operations in a Unidata database to enable easier access to information. When approached by SLASPA with the problems they were experiencing regarding the airport management, Parkinson immediately thought that BlueFinity's mv.NET could be the tool they needed to bring the application online.

mv.NET Flies High Above The Rest

A visit to BlueFinity's head offices in September 2007 marked the start of the project as Parkinson met with BlueFinity's Lead Developer, David Cooper. Having had experience using Redback [now known as WebDE] in the past, Parkinson was con-

cerned about development time. "In previous experiences using Redback, I found I had to spend time writing an inordinate amount of code to design the application," he explains. "I needed a product that would allow rapid application development in order to meet the tight deadlines SLASPA required."

Parkinson was assured that a steep learning curve and a lengthy development effort could be avoided if mv.NET was used. Additionally, since mv.NET is available for all MultiValue databases, it meant that he would be able to create applications for the web while taking advantage of his many years experience with Unidata.

The speed of application development using mv.NET allowed Parkinson to produce applications in an amazing timescale. "By the end of October 2007, I had the entire airport database for both airports and about 75% of the statistical database live," he explains. "mv.NET was easy to use, and the documentation and support from BlueFinity was a huge catalyst in allowing me to make such progress. There is absolutely no way I could have completed development in the timescales required using a product like Redback. This was largely in part due to the databinding available in mv.NET. It eliminated the need to write lots of code."

Full Speed Ahead: The Case for Databinding

The overall goal of mv.NET is to make it easier and quicker for developers to create MultiValue-linked .NET applications. This is done by providing several ways to get to the MultiValue data, reducing coding while maintaining an efficient data access layer.

Databinding, if used correctly, can provide a powerful boost to programmer productivity. The concept of databinding is not new. It essentially revolves around the concept of reducing the programming burden by allowing developers to hook into frequently required data-oriented interface features and capabilities by setting properties of controls at design or (less commonly) run-time – as opposed to writing code. BlueFinity regard it as a key tool in lightening the burden placed upon application developers by today's ever increasing demand for application sophistication. Implemented properly, it can provide significant savings in terms of development timescales for both the simplest and most advanced business applications.

"The Binding Objects module of mv.NET is dedicated to providing databinding technology that pays more than simple lip-service the concept of programming without code," explains David Cooper, Lead Developer at BlueFinity. "Not only does Binding Objects provide RAD capabilities but it does so in such a way as to allow the full flexibility of the MultiValue data model to be embraced within an application. It also has the advantage of working within the industry's most powerful and widely used Windows development environment - Visual Studio".

Ready for Take-off

Today, the Saint Lucia Air and Sea Port Authority sits at the technological forefront of the Caribbean. Better data reporting gives SLASPA management and appropriate Government ministers the information they need when they need it, and - most importantly - the more efficient systems have led to the average customer waiting time being reduced to less than 30 minutes.

The Airports Statistics Management Information System (ASMIS) now captures data on all aircraft and passenger movements at both George F.L. Charles and Hewanorra International airports. It is designed to enable the input of source data by Air Traffic Controllers and AIS Clerks as well as the verification of such data by the Assistant Airport Managers.

In addition to the airport and statistics system, Parkinson has developed numerous other applications utilizing mv.NET for SLASPA. Parkinson explains, "Since October, we've added features to the airport management application, added yacht management and designed an application that accesses cruise liner databases and vessels to give a visual representation of the harbour in St Lucia...all using BlueFinity's mv.NET. The next projects will be linking into the existing systems and I have it in mind to use web services to transfer the data from system to system."

Bright Horizons

Ideal Business Services continues to provide reliable support for the Information Systems implemented to date, and SLASPA envisages a long-term business relationship with them towards the attainment of a fully automated business entity.

Mrs. Grace Michel, Information Services Director for the St. Lucia Air & Sea Ports Authority, credits Ideal Business Systems for choosing mv.NET. "The Saint Lucia Air & Sea Ports Authority (SLASPA) is fortunate to have benefited from the programming services of Ideal Business Services Limited (IBS). The company, through its project manager, has transformed our air and seaport operations by effectively utilizing technology to design and implement the type of Information Systems that have resulted in increased operational efficiencies throughout SLASPA."

Parkinson feels confident in his decision to use mv.NET for application development - due in no small part to the fact that BlueFinity International is a subsidiary of MPower1 International, a major player in the MultiValue marketplace. BlueFinity is one of four MultiValue companies in Mpower's MultiValue stable, which means they already have the endorsement of a large company, excellent and dedicated management, and the financial backing required for future development.

"mv.NET has proved nothing less than a revelation," Parkinson concludes. "I am very impressed with BlueFinity, especially on support. They are totally customer facing and will drop everything if you have a problem. As we continue to enhance and develop applications, we're confident that BlueFinity will be there with us long into the future."

For more information

Visit www.bluefinity.com, or email sales@bluefinity.com for specific information on BlueFinity's Red-Back replacement program.

About BlueFinity International

BlueFinity International, a member of the Mpower1 Group of Companies (www.mpower1.com) offers its two flagship products – mv.NET and RSDC – to the global MultiValue community. mv.NET allows the full benefits of the .NET service oriented architecture technology to be realized by users of established MultiValue applications; RSDC enables MultiValue developers to utilize the very latest Microsoft Reporting Services technology. For more information, visit www.bluefinity.com.