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New Tool Helps Small Businesses Reduce Extra Paperwork

Posted: 21 August, 2007

By leveraging Microsoft technologies this Perth software developer has created a new mobile communications tool that connects small business office workers to their team in the field.

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Company Overview

Microsoft Certified Partner Anthem Software was founded in Perth, Western Australia, in 2001 and specialises in mobile communications solutions for small businesses.

Business Challenge

Anthem Software recognised that many small businesses faced similar problems and that these were the direct result of poor communication between office-based and mobile workers and a lack of business process automation.

"Scribbled notes and phone messages are an inefficient and time-consuming way of communicating that slows business operations," says Adrian Floate, Director, Anthem Software. "In addition, a lack of effective communication channels prevents collaboration between staff in the office and employees out on the road."

Anthem Software saw that employees working with paper-based systems were less productive than those using automated business processes. The company wanted to develop a software solution that would streamline the disjointed workflows many small businesses rely on.

"Look at how some businesses keep track of jobs: one person books the job, a mobile employee does the work and someone else generates an invoice," says Floate. "This manual process is time-consuming and prone to errors. At the end of the week, all the manager has is a timesheet and a number on the balance sheet. Companies need to be

Solution Overview

Customer Profile

Anthem Software is a Microsoft Certified Partner specialising in mobile software solutions for small business. The company is based in Perth with 22 staff across Australia.

Business Situation

To help its customers improve communication between office and on-the-road staff, Anthem Software wanted to create a mobile access solution that enabled clients to automate workflows.

Solution

Anthem Software developed Reach 4, a mobile computing platform that digitally connects office employees with mobile workers. It is built on and extends the Microsoft platform, including Microsoft Windows Mobile and Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2.

Benefits

- Streamlined small business operations.
- Easy integration and built-in features.
- Sophisticated development platform.
- Competitive costs.
- User-friendly interface.

Software and Services

making better use of their data."

"We knew there had to be a smarter way for companies to sell, procure, warehouse and supply timely services. Making the sale is only the first hurdle. Completing the paperwork, getting the order to the warehouse and picking and shipping the goods are daily battles all businesses must conquer."



“ ...Customers who use Reach 4 don't have to write down or phone in orders... At the touch of a button, an order taken in Perth can be used to automatically generate a picking slip in a warehouse in Sydney. ”

Adrian Floate
Director
Anthem Software



"Anthem Software's customers who use Reach 4 don't have to write down or phone in orders," says Floate. "At the touch of a button, an order taken in Perth can be used to automatically generate a picking slip in a warehouse in Sydney."

Reach 4 provides rich remote access functionality. Mobile sales teams can read e-mail, check calendars, set appointments and track stock availability while on the road.

"Anthem Software partnered with Microsoft because it is a leader in its field and its goals align with ours," says Floate. "But most importantly, our customers demand Microsoft-compatible mobile solutions."

Business Benefits

Saving time, paper and money

Reach 4 guarantees mobile workers fast, accurate access to mission-critical data. As a result of implementing the application, many of Anthem Software's customers have reported improvements in resource utilisation of up to 50%.

One such customer is Lifestyle Innovations MobileStore Franchises, which supplies a range of high-demand outdoor and leisure products. When franchisees go on sales calls to businesses and social groups, Reach 4 gives them full online

Solution

In response to this market need, Anthem Software developed Reach 4, a mobile computing platform that digitally connects office-bound employees with co-workers in the field. Built on the Microsoft® .NET Framework 3.0, Reach 4 enables organisations to mobilise business information to improve the way they carry out daily tasks.

Reach 4 utilises Microsoft's integrated range of server products, using handheld devices running Microsoft Windows Mobile and a server network based on Microsoft Windows® Server 2003 with Microsoft Active Directory®, Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 and Microsoft SQL Server 2005. The software also integrates functionality from Microsoft Office Professional 2003 or 2007, including Microsoft Office Outlook®. For smaller implementations, Reach 4 can run on Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2 Premium Edition.

- Microsoft Office Professional 2007
- Microsoft Office Professional 2003
- Microsoft Office Outlook 2007
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
- Microsoft SQL Server 2005
- Microsoft Windows Mobile 5.0
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 R2
- Microsoft Small Business Server 2003 R2
- **Technologies**
- Microsoft .NET Framework
- Microsoft Active Directory

access to the company's catalogue and ordering system. With the press of a button, they can synchronise back to base and automatically generate product orders and invoices.

"Franchisees save time and time is money, especially for mobile sales people," says Simon Braunthal, Partner, Lifestyle Innovations. "They love the software; it is so simple to use, it doesn't let you down and it's an exciting tool to display and use in front of customers. Our customers receive professional service from product to invoice, and that gets them talking about us positively, which is what we want."

Confectionery manufacturer, importer and distributor Chokey Road installed Reach 4 to allow its eight mobile sales staff to take customer orders on-site using handheld computers. Orders are immediately uploaded to the company's accounting system and picking slips are generated automatically for the company's warehouse. Warehouse staff can fulfill orders as they come in over the course of the day, which allows the company to offer next-day delivery. It also reduces manual data entry, helping ensure customers receive exactly what they order.

"We were going to devise our own system, but discovered Anthem Software already had exactly what we wanted," says Richard Blance, Proprietor, Chokey Road. "Reach 4 integrates with our accounting software. It gives us the capabilities to deliver professional service and didn't cost an arm and a leg."

Reach 4 provides a collaborative platform that enables customers to significantly streamline the process of taking and fulfilling orders.

"We've effectively taken lots of paper, forms and manual calculations and put them into one platform," says Floate. "This results in swifter fulfillment of products and services to customers. Fast fulfillment lowers a company's stock-holding costs. This in turn improves cash flow. Processing times can be cut from 30 days to two days."

Easy integration and built-in features

Microsoft's integrated range of server, desktop, mobile and productivity software has allowed Anthem Software to create a powerful product ecosystem. Microsoft products come with a wide range of in-built features that enable Anthem Software to create secure and scalable mobile applications as a comprehensive packaged solution that can be rolled out to customers with a minimum of fuss.

"Microsoft products are wonderful to work with because they fit together seamlessly," says Floate. "Using Microsoft means we don't have to worry about building features ourselves or integrating products from third-party vendors to achieve the functionality we need. In addition, the Microsoft .NET platform is flexible when customising and deploying Reach 4."

Reach 4 harnesses the data analysis capabilities of Microsoft SQL Server 2005 so mobile workers can access timely business information.

"SQL Server dissects and analyses data and Reach 4 feeds this through," says Floate. "This gives employees out on the road better business insight and helps them nail business deals."

Sophisticated development platform and competitive costs

Building Reach 4 using the Microsoft .NET Framework gives Anthem Software a streamlined development process and the ability to customise the product to suit customer's needs.

"We maintain a single code base that can be ported across multiple operating systems from Microsoft Windows Server to Windows Mobile, Windows XP and

Windows Vista™," says Floate.

Working with the integrated Microsoft product range also gives Anthem Software cost savings that it can pass on to customers.

"For a customer using Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2, we can roll out a solution for a fraction of the total cost of ownership of offerings from other vendors such as Oracle and Sybase," says Floate. "This competitive advantage is largely achieved by Microsoft offering an end-to-end development platform from server technology right through to mobile devices."

User-friendly interface minimises training

The familiar Microsoft Office Outlook 2007 interface makes the transition to Reach 4 simple for employees.

"Our desktop application stack snaps into Office Outlook, so people are using a familiar interface," says Floate. "This lowers training costs substantially."

More Information

For more information about Anthem Software products and services, call (08) 9226 3855 or [visit their website](#).

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