



Products

Newlook
Web Services

Challenger improves process and saves money with Newlook Web Services



Background

As one of Canada's largest privately owned transportation and logistics companies, Challenger Motor Freight (www.challenger.com) is a transporter of goods anywhere across North America as well as internationally, with a full range of transportation, logistics, warehousing and distribution services. Serving locations worldwide, it is critical that Challenger be equipped with systems and processes that allow them to effectively enter, store and access data across their enterprise.

Challenge

Challenger's invoicing process relied on multiple systems and time-consuming manual data entry. Challenger estimated that employees were spending an average of four hours per day manually entering data off a spreadsheet. In addition, Challenger handled third-party logistics and didn't have an efficient method to get those invoices from its MercuryGate Transportation Management System (TMS) to its GL. Both of these procedures took significant effort and required streamlining.

Unfortunately, there didn't seem to be a quick, convenient fix. Unless they could find a better solution, Challenger programmers would have to rip apart their entire RPG system to access the code in need of update. These modifications, due to the time they would require, would have been extremely disruptive to the business. Not only that, but the business process codes embedded on top of these invoicing codes would also need to be altered.

Solution

The Newlook suite overcame these core challenges quickly and efficiently. The key is that Newlook, more than being just a Web-facing product, lets programmers tap into the IBM i business process code and quickly develop Web services to address pressing business needs. Using Newlook, Challenger developers wrote .NET applications to manage and automate the way data is both entered and processed through various systems in the invoicing routine. In particular, they were able to automate interaction between several of Challenger's internal and cloud systems to greatly facilitate the way invoices are generated and managed.

Using the .NET framework on Newlook, Challenger programmers built applications to automate two of their invoicing processes. First, they simplified the way their invoices were being generated by developing an application that calls data from SQL Server to build an order and generate an invoice.

Challenger's second issue — the need to record invoice information in the GL running on a separate system — was resolved in a similar manner. The issue involved MercuryGate, the cloud-based TMS that Challenger used for its third-party logistics (3PL) business. MercuryGate is an integral part of Challenger's business, but it didn't communicate easily with the in-house financials that are part of a highly-customized ICC system (Innovative Computing Corporation, now part of TMW). Using Newlook tools, Challenger developers built an interface from MercuryGate into ICC, enabling invoices that were sent to customers to be duplicated automatically on the back-end in the GL.

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When you need to tap into the 400 business process, that's where the Newlook products show their full power; they're not just for re-facing, but for quick adjustment of complicated processes that have been running for years on the 400.

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- says Les Peebles, IT director, Challenger

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It's really amazing when you see someone get it, and they realize all of the things they can do with the Newlook suite. Les Peebles and his team quickly created interfaces that hooked into existing technology, eliminated hundreds of hours of manual work and greatly improved system integration. Just amazing!

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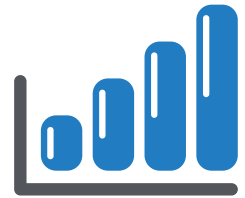
- says Brad Suther, Senior Consultant, Fresche Solutions



Highly automated systems reduced daily invoicing tasks from four hours to a few minutes



Easy-to-use interfaces required no training and freed up employees to concentrate on other tasks



ROI for the two projects: \$40K per year in efficiency savings, recovering project costs within the first year

Results

The manual data entry that had previously taken four hours a day to complete is now done in 3-4 minutes, with only a few seconds of actual work by an employee. This not only saves hours of time, but also greatly reduces the risk of human error. The interface between MercuryGate and ICC has completely streamlined invoicing for all 3PL business. The process is now almost completely automatic, with invoices entered into the GL where they can be received against.

In both cases, invoice management is vastly improved and more efficient, staff are freed up for other work and accuracy is enhanced. And development time was minimal: a short training effort developed a prototype that provided sample code and helped accelerate development.

Even better, employees throughout the organization are now looking for other ways to achieve new functionality or reduce costs by using Newlook products to add Web services, create interfaces and improve integration.

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