Utilizing Microsoft technologies to build an integrated E-Commerce platform

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Media & Entertainment

Customer Profile

Author Solutions, Inc. (ASI), the world leader in the fastest-growing segment in publishing, was founded as AuthorHouse in 1997 by an aspiring author who recognized the need for a simple, effective self-publishing process. Author Solutions was formed in 2007 after the acquisition of iUniverse – AuthorHouse's primary competitor in the self-publishing space.

ASI's core self-publishing imprints: AuthorHouse and iUniverse, provide comprehensive book publishing and marketing services. Each author is assigned an advocate who personally guides them through the publishing process. Authors retain all rights, maintain editorial control and choose the services that best suit their goals. Based in Bloomington, Ind., ASI has grown into the world's largest self publisher.

Business Situation

To progress to the next level of success, ASI needed to build an integrated platform for all of their imprints including: sales activities, publishing back office, ecommerce sales and content management.

Solution

Innovative Architects, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, helped ASI design a new business platform implementing Microsoft BizTalk Server 2006 R2 and Microsoft Commerce Server 2007.

Benefits

- Sales staff better linked with clients
- Online catalogs updated within seconds
- Ease of operations facilitated growth and expansion

"BizTalk & Commerce Server enabled Author Solutions to quickly build an E-Commerce platform helping to standardize common technologies. Our Innovative Architects team helped apply the knowledge of Microsoft technology to enhance and service Author Solutions to fuel growth and proactive decisions." –Dan Michaels, Innovative Architects

For ASI establishing a new E-Commerce platform has been nothing short of transformational. By collaborating with Innovative Architects, the publishing house revamped its business identity, improved client communications and maximized growth. Innovative Architects helped ASI achieve several business goals at once by using two key technology solutions: Microsoft Commerce Server 2007 and Microsoft BizTalk Server 2006 R2 (BTS).

As an all-important first step, Innovative Architects connected ASI's core portal platform for to the eCommerce front end. This allowed each system user to access consistent data, reports and tools. With this robust system in place, the Author Solutions team can more efficiently manage customers, catalogs and E-Commerce data. This improved efficiency translated into an increased customer base.

Innovative Architects further enhanced the company's capabilities by designing an updated, secure integration and web services integration layer. This layer employs an application auditing framework, message routing and a solid development integration platform. By combining pre-integrated architectures, up-to-the-minute software components and reliable methodologies, Innovative Architects created the cross-industry and industry-specific solutions necessary to advance ASI's business conditions. By partnering with Innovative Architects, ASI leveraged Microsoft technologies to achieve powerful, scalable solutions while accomplishing its core business objectives.

For More Information

For more information about the Microsoft BizTalk Server solution, call the Innovative Architects Sales Information Center at 770.623.5734. To access information on line, go to:
 www.InnovativeArchitects.com

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

Software and Services

Servers & Tools
- BizTalk Server 2006 R2
- Commerce Server 2007
- SQL Server 2005
- VisualStudio.NET 2005

Partner

Innovative Architects, LLC

Situation

Author Solutions has generated the publishing industry's latest expansion, and embraced the next generation of technologies and services that will allow more authors to achieve their publishing goals. In the past five years, the self publishing space has become publishing's fastest-growing market. Powered by the experience of helping more than 50,000 authors publish more than 80,000 titles, ASI's self-publishing brands are the leaders of this fast-growing segment of book publishing.

ASI's iUniverse brand allows authors to take their work from an initial draft to a professional-quality book that can be marketed worldwide. When ASI acquired iUniverse in late 2007, it was discovered that the company's legacy platform was fragile and in dire need of replacement. This new platform developed for iUniverse by Appirio, and utilizing the Salesforce.com CRM management model, can be replicated for the publisher's other brands. It combines Microsoft BizTalk Server 2006 R2 with Visual Studio .Net 2008 and Commerce Server 2007.

ASI uses the SalesForce platform to manage daily operations and processes with a portal driven by Commerce Server 2007 to populate book inventory and catalogs. ASI's challenge was to update Commerce Server data whenever their sales staff changed products on SalesForce. Rapid updates were necessary so the portal would reflect changes. Since the iUniverse portal drives the brand's business and sales processes, updates are crucial to sales and revenue.

Solution

Innovative Architects presented ASI with an ideal solution, using both BizTalk Server 2006 R2 and Commerce Server 2007. BizTalk adapters were used to import, query and export product catalogs, and Commerce Server features were used to profiles orders and inventories.

By tailoring the solution to the customer, Innovative Architects developed a "heart beat trigger" functionality using BizTalk Server and SQL Server 2005. This trigger constantly polls SalesForce for updates while driving the polling interval during peak times. In this way, users experience optimal performance and rapid response rates.

Innovative Architects also used the BizTalk Server to import catalogs with products and categories. This was accomplished in conjunction with the Commerce Server Catalog and Commerce Server Inventory adapters provided by Commerce Server 2007.

Innovative Architects configured the adapters to incrementally update the catalogs. This allowed single product updates without re-importing the entire catalog. Additionally, the adapter was designed to handle relations for products and categories. By capitalizing on the adapters' out-of-box configuration ability, Innovative Architects tailored a solution to ASI's needs.

Benefits
- Ease of integration between Commerce Server 2007 and BizTalk Server 2006 R2
- Catalogs updated within seconds of SalesForce updates
- Integration of SalesForce and Commerce Server 2007 links ASI's sales staff with clients
- Company growth and expansion

Summary

Innovative Architects approached ASI's challenges as it does every project – with concern for the client's individual requirements. By understanding that there is no "one size fits all" approach, Innovative Architects offers creative solutions to complex business challenges.