

The Client: Trans/Mid-America
Industry: Truck Permit Service
Number of Employees: 30

Key Benefits:

Upon complete integration with TMA, Backware will:

- Improve TMA's business capabilities, capacity, adaptability, and customer service
- Support cost containment
- Provide the opportunity to create new revenue streams

"In August 2002, we chose Phoenix Web Group to develop this complex data-driven Web system. They understood its critical concepts and related implications. This combination of enthusiasm and knowledge produced excellent results. They paid great attention to the functional details of system design and produced an amazing set of software."

~Ron Waymire
Research and Development Director
Trans/Mid-America

Trans/Mid-America Case Study

Truck Permit Service Encapsulates Entire Business Model with Backware



Company Profile:

Headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska, Trans/Mid-America (TMA) is a permit wire-service company, in business since 1968. It serves the trucking industry by receiving permit requests from truckers and submitting applications for their permits to the various jurisdictions along their routes. TMA then receives the approved permits from those jurisdictions and sends them to the customer's preferred delivery point.

The Challenges:

TMA needed to expand its infrastructure to provide better customer service, and move that infrastructure to the Web. It also needed a long life-cycle for the software, and the ability to rapidly adapt to business changes. Because TMA worked with so many government jurisdictions, its business systems needed great adaptability; any jurisdiction could change its rules, documents, procedures and requirements, and TMA would have to respond immediately. Consequently, it needed highly customizable data-collection, charge collection, document production, and document/data distribution. TMA also wanted the ability to sell any good or service – including internal services – that the company might select, and it wanted end-to-end automation where appropriate. These challenges called for sophisticated development knowledge, skills and resources that TMA did not have.

The Project Objectives:

The new system needed the ability to generate data-collection interfaces on the fly from metadata as part of an ordering process. It needed to provide help documentation, validations for data collection and data transformation rules. It needed the ability to map resultant data to custom documents, serialize those documents, format the documents as XML or PDF, and distribute those documents via fax, e-mail or data-exchange. In addition, it needed a secure, highly accessible, search-driven user environment that would support business-level data maintenance, multi-tasking, reporting and custom user account exposures. By providing custom exposures, employees, customers and suppliers could work directly within TMA's system without requiring substantial extensions; TMA could reuse code and interfaces as appropriate, minimize code maintenance and improve the efficiency of its processes.

The Solution:

After interviewing a few software development firms, a consultant introduced TMA to Neil Johnson, President of PWG. In the end, TMA chose PWG because Neil readily understood the nature of the project and shared TMA's enthusiasm for it.

The process was as much one of discovery as it was one of construction. TMA and PWG met intensely for a few weeks, and then PWG coded. Then, they met again to review the code and make changes. Because of the generic nature of the project, however, an apparently minor change might require major changes to the core system. As a result, the general process proved to be the proverbial "two steps forward, one step back," constantly re-evaluating the systemic objectives and concrete business needs against the capabilities of the resulting code. Over time, the core became increasingly stable, flexible and robust.

As the project developed, it became apparent that the generic, dynamic nature of the core application could be used to create a variety of business models. Consequently, PWG developed the application to meet TMA's concrete business needs in a way that allowed TMA to provide application services. PWG implemented database and connection isolation, provided support for multiple instances of the application, strengthened security and improved browser independence.

At completion, this software will improve TMA's business capabilities, capacity, adaptability and customer service. It will support cost containment and provide opportunity to create new revenue streams.

At the present time, TMA is building and testing its business model in the Backware environment.