

HOLMES CORPORATION

Solution Overview

Industry
Business Services

Microsoft Great Plains Partner
Next Generation Systems, PLLP

Scenario

Frequent downtime, a large volume of orders and a multitude of required reports led Holmes Corporation to search for a fast, stable and flexible business management solution.

Company Profile

Holmes Corporation is a wholesale distributor of custom certification training programs for large associations.

Benefits

Using Dynamics, Crystal Reports and Microsoft SQL Server, Holmes Corporation can generate their numerous reports and support countless orders in the system—all quickly and in a stable environment.

Software Used

Microsoft Great Plains Dynamics
Financial Series
Distribution Series
Collections Management
Integration Manager
Crystal Reports
FRx
Star Ship by VTEC
Microsoft SQL Server

Demographic Information

Annual Revenue: \$7 million
Number of Employees: 35
Number of Users: 10
Number of Sites: 1

Transaction Volume: Over 30,000 customers; business is seasonal; order volume varies from 100s of orders per month to 1000s in others.

Migrated from a 25-year old custom accounting application for IBM main frame to Dynamics on Pervasive, and then to Dynamics on Microsoft SQL Server.

Holmes Corporation needed a fast, reliable, flexible and customizable solution that could handle a large volume of orders and vast reporting needs. Implementing Microsoft Great Plains Dynamics, Crystal Reports and Microsoft SQL Server dramatically reduced the time it takes to enter orders and to process reports, virtually eliminating their downtime.

Located in Eagan, Minnesota, Holmes Corporation is a creator and distributor of computer-based training materials for the professional association industry. For the past 25 years, they had used a custom accounting software program running on an outdated, mainframe computer to process sales orders and maintain their accounting and financial reporting needs.

Due to the large volume of orders processed through the company's sales order department and the unique accounting and reporting needs of the company's client base, the company focused on updating their existing software.

The Search

Holmes Corporation didn't expect any new system to meet all of their unique requirements off the shelf, so they realized they would need the most flexible, customizable software system available. After researching the major business management systems, the company selected Microsoft Great Plains Dynamics.

As sales order volumes increased and reporting requirements grew, Holmes Corporation's system response time slowed significantly and the company's server would frequently lock up. The company's Vice President of Information Services, Erik Hinkie, was spending a lot of time on day-to-day maintenance issues.

Hinkie quickly realized that the company's current server and accounting software would need to be upgraded to improve system response and avoid costly downtime. After careful analysis of their current business processes and accounting requirements they, with their Partner, Next Generation Systems, determined that Microsoft Great Plains Dynamics running on the Microsoft SQL Server platform would be an excellent solution.

The Need for Speed

The posting time for their sales and financial transactions dropped by over 90%—these processes, which took up to 30 minutes to complete every day, now take seconds after moving to Microsoft SQL Server.

In addition, Holmes Corporation saw a dramatic decrease in the amount of time it took to manage customer orders. Order entry windows that once lagged now appeared more quickly. Customer history inquiries that used to take a painful amount of time, now complete instantly. Although their transaction volume may not

be considered large to some organizations, their customer service department has a lot on their plates, and the increased speed has been very much appreciated.

Crystal Reports is heavily used to create a multitude of reports from the Dynamics database. Reports were run on a very scheduled basis and by only a few people because it could take 15 minutes to run a large report. With Microsoft SQL Server 2000, the same reports literally take seconds. As a result, they have utilized Crystal Report's web reporting capabilities to provide access to reports to all of their employees. With a click of a link they have instant access to the information they need to more effectively do their job.

Microsoft SQL Server's Extra Benefits

Prior to installing Microsoft SQL Server, frequent errors occurred on their system with the downtime occurring at least once a month—even with running periodic database maintenance routines. When the system went down, it would take an average of a few hours to get the system back up. After installing Microsoft SQL Server 2000 there has been no downtime in the past year.

Microsoft SQL Server database maintenance is handled through scheduled maintenance plans that run on an ongoing basis without needing to block out a three or four hour time period on an evening or weekend. Microsoft SQL Server 2000 also provides the ability to perform scheduled backups during the business day. Based on their transaction volume, their databases are set to back up every two hours during the business day. That way, if they ever do run into a problem, they can perform a point in time restore of our data, never having more than two hours of lost orders.

The Results

Switching from a mainframe to a client/server accounting system cut the time Holmes Corporation customer service staff requires to process the high volume of sales orders. In addition, the new system has dramatically reduced the time the accounting department requires to perform basic accounting tasks because the new program allows them to easily generate reports in whatever format they wish. This eliminates, in most cases, the need to download data to spreadsheets for manual manipulation. The time savings allows the four-person accounting staff to spend more time on analysis, which has generated cost savings in many areas of the business.

Holmes Corporation has estimated that they are saving roughly \$25,000 per year, or \$100,000 over the past four years—due to needing less internal support and the reduced amount of downtime.

For more information about Microsoft Great Plains Business Solutions, visit www.greatplains.com

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