

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE

Solution Overview

Industry

Nonprofit

Microsoft Business Solutions Partner

Solutions Consulting Group
San Diego, California, USA

Scenario

The American Council on Exercise needed a new business solution with enhanced reporting functionality and integration capabilities.

Company Profile

The American Council on Exercise promotes exercise and health through educating and certifying fitness instructors and the public.

Benefits

Microsoft Business Solutions gives the American Council on Exercise simplified reporting, integration with an existing database and a stable base on which to build the organization's future .NET system.

Software Used

Microsoft Business Solutions—Great Plains
Financials
Inventory and Order Processing
Microsoft Access
Microsoft SQL Server™
Microsoft Windows 2000 Server
V-Technologies StarShip

Demographic Information

Number of Employees: 50
Number of Sites: 1
Number of Users: 20
Transaction Volume: 300 sales orders per week

Migrated from Macola

The American Council on Exercise needed an improved financial system with improved reporting features. The organization also needed a business solution with the ability to handle orders from its Web site and integrate with an existing Microsoft Access/SQL Server customer database. It found the needed features and functionality with Microsoft® Business Solutions—Great Plains®.

The American Council on Exercise (ACE) is a nonprofit organization committed to promoting active, healthy lifestyles and their positive effects on the mind, body and spirit. ACE pledges to enable all segments of society to enjoy the benefits of physical activity and protect the public against unsafe and ineffective fitness products and trends. ACE accomplishes this mission by setting certification and education standards for fitness instructors and through ongoing public education about the importance of exercise.

A Need for Improved Reporting and More

ACE previously used Macola for its financial software needs and eventually realized a need for an improved and updated financial solution package. The organization's growing internal accounting needs and the ability to produce better reports for management were just a few of the improvements ACE sought. Microsoft Business Solutions, Great Plains provided the enterprise level financial package ACE needed.

After bringing Alex Mirnezam V.P. of Finance on board and the hiring of Michael J. Sidley, CPA as director of IT for ACE, the company continued to expand its reliance on the capabilities of Microsoft Business Solutions, particularly to deliver targeted reporting for business decision makers. Because Sidley had extensive experience with Microsoft Business Solutions, the company looked first in that direction for a method to integrate orders made through the Web site store at www.acefitness.org. After reviewing capabilities of the E-commerce series against competing solutions, Microsoft Business Solutions stood out as the right choice for ACE's Web store.

Improved Integration and Reporting

The organization utilizes its existing customer relationship manager—a Microsoft Access front end with a Microsoft SQL Server back-end database—to input Web orders into Sales Order Processing. This Access database is integrated into Sales Order Processing by Continuum—a toolset that allows customers to quickly integrate applications with Microsoft Business Solutions. The customer database also links back to the Sales Order Processing history, enabling customer representatives to research a customer's order history and provide improved customer service.

"Because we rely on Microsoft Office products and have Microsoft Business Solutions running in the background, we have no doubt that Microsoft Business Solutions Customer Relationship Manager will complete the loop for us."

Michael J. Sidley, CPA
Director of IT
American Council on Exercise

The month-end reporting process improved with the implementation of Microsoft Business Solutions. Now, FRx Financial Reporter and Crystal Reports provide informative, easily produced financial and sales reports. "If we didn't have Microsoft Business Solutions, month end would be much more difficult," says Sidley. "Our CFO uses FRx to directly produce reports and only occasionally needs IT support for reports."

According to Sidley, ACE saves at least 10 hours per week due to the improved reporting process. Prior to the new solution, an employee spent two hours a day preparing data in a spreadsheet for a report. Now, thanks to FRx and Crystal Reports, this is no longer necessary.

The Future is Microsoft Business Solutions CRM and .NET

ACE is actively developing the E-commerce series as its Web site store solution in conjunction with Microsoft Commerce Server 2002. For the future, ACE plans to implement Microsoft Business Solutions Customer Relationship Manager (CRM) and completely standardize on Microsoft technologies, including an ASP.NET Web site. "We'll be completely .NET," Sidley says. "By doing that, we expect to have a very solid, easy-to-develop foundation on which to build our marketing efforts. We plan to integrate the Commerce Server 2002 profiling elements with the Microsoft Business Solutions CRM. This will enable us to do targeted, one-to-one marketing on the Web and e-mail marketing for specific objectives."

"We plan to use the cutting-edge tools that Microsoft provides, to be proactive in delivering a better Web site experience to our customers," says Owen. "And to make sure we can more tightly integrate the services we provide our customers so we can identify and support them."

Return on Investment

ACE realizes benefits in many areas from Microsoft Business Solutions:

- **Integration**—By utilizing Continuum, the organization's Access customer database easily integrates with Sales Order Processing.
- **Reporting**—Reports are easier to produce and more informative—ACE saves 10 hours per week on one report alone.
- **Order Fulfillment**—By using StarShip shipping software integrated with its financial system, ACE saves 40 hours per week preparing and shipping orders.
- **Inventory**—ACE has more accurate inventory control and—because the inventory is so accurate—it saves money on the audit process.
- **Expense Checks**—Employees appreciate how quickly they receive their reimbursement checks after submitting expenses.
- **Standardization**—ACE extensively utilizes Microsoft products and, because they are designed to work together seamlessly, the organization enjoys a stable, easy-to-develop, feature-laden system.

For more information about Microsoft Business Solutions, visit www.microsoft.com/BusinessSolutions

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