
INSIDER WEEKLY

For iSeries and AS/400 Managers

FEBRUARY 16, 2007

Porting Visual Basic .NET code to WebSphere: A success story

System i vendor RJS Software Systems recently met with a problem that many System i shops could face as they move applications to WebSphere. By finding a solution to the problem, RJS was able to complete the project for \$300,000 less than it had originally planned.

One RJS client, a large wine and liquor distributor, wanted to port WebDocs, an RJS document management application, to its WebSphere Portal Server. The company, which has asked that its name not be released, wanted to make WebDocs data available to customers and suppliers via the portal. But much of the code used in WebDocs is Microsoft Visual Basic .NET. RJS founder and CTO Richard Schoen says the cost of rewriting the code far exceeded the budget his client was willing to pay.

“If I were to bring in 2 or 3 people and set up servers, it would probably take six to nine months. We worked out that it would have cost around \$300,000 to do that — far more than the customer was going to pay,” says Schoen.

RJS found a more affordable solution in the form of Grasshopper, an open-source plug-in to the Microsoft Visual Studio environment, which, among other things, converts Visual Basic .NET code into JavaByte code. The JavaByte code can then be deployed in WebSphere Portal.

Schoen says converting the necessary code took dramatically less time than planned, and RJS was easily able to complete the project within the customer’s budget constraints.

“We had 90% of the code finished within a day. We had the entire thing ready in a matter of a few weeks. For us, this is really important because it means we can reuse our Visual Basic .NET code. Essentially it means we can run our Visual Basic .NET code on the System i,” says Schoen.

Schoen says other System i shops can benefit from his experience and move more quickly toward a service-oriented architecture (SOA) with WebSphere Portal as a primary component.

“This could make it more attractive for people to jump into a portal environment without a lot of in-house Java experience,” says Schoen.

Grasshopper was created by Mainsoft. For more on the Grasshopper plug-in, visit Mainsoft’s Web site at <http://mainsoft.com/index.aspx>. For more on the success RJS found with the tool, see <http://mainsoft.com/solutions/rjs.aspx>.

Insider Weekly for iSeries and AS/400 Managers

Editor • Davin Wilfrid
Copy Editor • Laura Scott
Production Manager • Randi Swartz
Web Design • Jillian Palazola

BUSINESS ADDRESS

Insider Weekly for iSeries and AS/400 Managers,
c/o iSeries 400 Experts, 11300 Rockville Pike,
Suite 1100, Rockville, MD, 20852-3030.

This article is reprinted with permission from iSeries 400 Experts. Copyright violations will be prosecuted. For more information on the System i trade publications offered by iSeries 400 Experts, see www.iseries400experts.com.