

Red Mountain Retail Group

Process Re-engineering & Automation

Located in Orange County with around 100 employees, Red Mountain Retail Group (RMRG) is a commercial real estate entity that buys, sells, and manages commercial properties.

Problem

Commercial real estate as an industry is given to cyclical fluctuations that cannot be controlled by industry participants. The challenge for RMRG is to develop a strong core group of employees and retain that group regardless of external market pressure. After fast and sometimes difficult growth during the strong markets of recent years, RMRG is working to prepare their core team for future boom markets during the current down cycle. Developing new technological tools and re-engineering its internal processes will allow the core team to scale operations with fewer growing pains when volume grows quickly in the future.

As most people know, real estate transactions accumulate mountains of paperwork with multiple approvals required. RMRG identified its rental process as the most inefficient. The existing paper-only process originated in Los Angeles. From there, the paperwork had to be couriered to three other locations in Southern California, then couriered back to Santa Ana, which typically took three weeks.



Process

Fairway was brought in by RMRG's internal staff who had worked with Fairway at previous client engagements. They redefined the process,

eliminating paperwork in the approval process, and reduced the process' duration from three weeks to one day. The new process would be implemented with a single internal web-based interface that lists all current tasks in real-time passive updates without requiring page refreshing.

Presented with the workflow specification, Fairway optimized it as necessary and worked with the RMRG IT manager to architect the solution. Together they took requirements from the RMRG project manager and produced the version 1.0 stable production product. After this first release, Fairway brought in another developer, who was trained by the original Fairway architect. The second Fairway expert was able to quickly learn the tools used by RMRG, and the original Fairway architect was able to roll off to another project with no impact to RMRG. Two internal RMRG developers joined the IT manager, Fairway, and an external user-interface designer to use iterative development to produce additional product versions, staying ahead of users' requirements.



Results

Reduction of the rental process from three weeks to a single day, elimination of stacks of paper records, and the creation of a database of rental information that is easily maintained and searched made this automation project a resounding success and has allowed RMRG staff to spend more time on revenue generating and cost reducing activities.

Fairway continues to implement new features ahead of the business' needs to significantly improve RMRG's productivity.

Technologies & Tools

The most challenging technological aspect of the project was its use of Web 2.0 standards, requiring pushing AJAX to its current limits. Fairway researched the cutting-edge technology and provided robust expertise to the development team.

Java SEAM's integrated architecture, testing, and data resources made development straightforward. And the team used DBUnit to create XML representations of data in addition to TestNG to facilitate testing.

Environment

- Windows 2003 Virtual Machines
- SQL Server 2005
- Microsoft Exchange Mail Server
- Active Directory

Language

- AJAX/Web 2.0
- Java

Code Tools

- Java SEAM Application Framework w/Hibernate
- DBUnit
- TestNG
- JavaServer Faces (JSF)
- JBoss Workflow Engine (JBPM)
- Trac
- Eclipse IDE
- Subversion SVN Source Control