

NET Data Leverages Seagull Software Technology to Revive Legacy Applications with a New Graphical Interface



Established in 1983, NET Data produces industry-specific application software for county government officials in the State of Texas. The company is headquartered in Sulphur Springs, TX, and has branch offices located in Waxahachie, Cleburne, Jacksboro and Houston, TX and Shreveport, LA.

Challenge

Confronted with shrinking budgets, increased workloads and heightened demands from constituents, many government organizations are turning to technology to help them operate more efficiently and improve the delivery of public services. In the state of Texas, thousands of county government employees leverage technology developed by software vendor, NET Data, to automate and speed business processes. For over twenty years, NET Data has been offering industry-specific software solutions to Texas county governments for judicial systems management, financial management and tax collection.

With their solutions based on an iSeries environment, NET Data was beginning to feel the pinch created by the proliferation of the Internet and Windows-based applications. Their customers were increasingly requesting Windows-like interfaces and point-and-click navigation, instead of the green screens driven by keyboard functions. "Our clients were becoming more accustomed to PCs, and people who were graduating from high schools and colleges that came to work for the counties had never even seen a green-screen environment before. Our customers began to tell us that they required usability and functionality similar to what was being provided in Windows-based applications," said Scott Stahl, vice president of NET Data. "To support our customers and maintain our competitive advantage, we started to look for a solution that could help us enhance our solutions," Stahl continued.

Solution

After evaluating various products, NET Data selected Seagull Software's LegaSuite GUI® technology to help them revive their solutions by replacing the character-based green screens with an intuitive graphical interface that can now be accessed via the Internet. LegaSuite GUI is the presentation integration module of Seagull Software's LegaSuite®, a comprehensive platform of software solutions for integrating legacy systems with the Web and new-generation architectures. LegaSuite GUI provides industry-leading developer tools and infrastructure for Web-to-host and Windows-to-host access to iSeries back-office applications. The solution offers dynamic development and deployment technology that empowers organizations to non-invasively deploy their iSeries applications to Windows, Java and HTML environments in a single work effort.

Using LegaSuite GUI, NET Data deployed their entire suite of iSeries-based applications with a Java-based front-end, without altering the existing COBOL code in any way. This new, thin, Java-based application deployment model, called NETD Online, presents customers with an easy-to-use and -learn, graphical interface that has replaced the complex, difficult-to-navigate green screens.



Key benefits:

- Provide customers with usability and functionality of a Web-based environment
- Maintain a competitive advantage
- Reduce training requirements
- Improve relationships with customers by supporting their needs
- Reduce number of incoming support calls

"We wanted to get into the browser world, but we didn't want to abandon the iSeries and the COBOL language that we developed all of our applications in. LegaSuite GUI empowered us and our customers to leverage existing legacy investments, while taking advantage of Web technologies."

— Scott Stahl
Vice President
NET Data

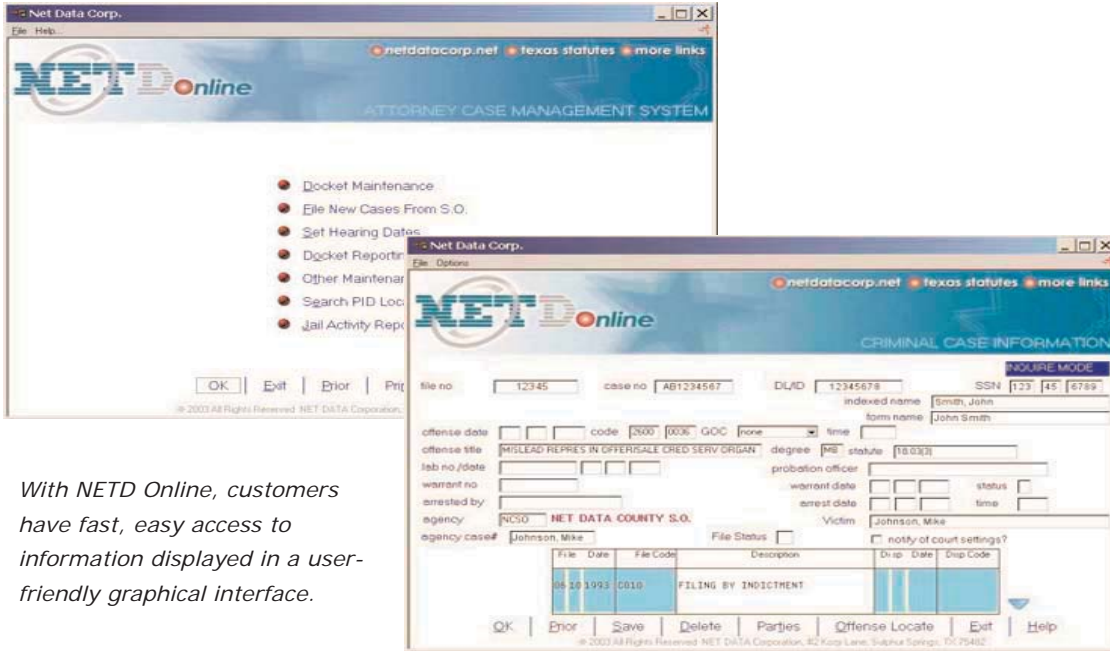


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"The new interface has been very well-received. The applications have not only been cosmetically improved, but more importantly, we've made it more comfortable to use for our customers," said Stahl.

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With NETD Online, customers have fast, easy access to information displayed in a user-friendly graphical interface.

LegaSuite GUI enabled NET Data to add in time-saving and user-friendly features like hover help, which provides users with instructions or other information to help them progress through the applications. "The hover help provides our customers with online documentation that they can refer to right on their desktops. It helps them learn the solutions and get productive faster. For us, having the hover help feature has reduced the number of customer support calls coming in," said Stahl.

Results

LegaSuite GUI also enabled NET Data to provide their customers with reliable and secure online access to the applications. "A lot of our customers have their iSeries located at the county courthouse, but have employees scattered throughout the county in smaller, remote offices. At some of these locations, phone communication or bandwidth is pretty poor. Fortunately the LegaSuite GUI-enhanced applications are thin and do not require very much bandwidth, so our customers can logon and quickly connect to the applications through a Java applet without incident. That is a big benefit," said Stahl.

NET Data is also benefiting from LegaSuite GUI's flexibility, enabling them to help their customers keep up with legislative mandates and regulations. "The applications and processes are heavily influenced by state or federal governments that require you to do things a certain way. LegaSuite GUI allows us to manipulate the applications so we can tailor them to support our customers' needs," commented Stahl.

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By deploying Seagull Software's LegaSuite GUI technology, NET Data has improved usability of their applications, allowing their customers to increase productivity, reduce training requirements and provide reliable, seamless access to remote employees - all by leveraging their legacy technology. "We wanted to get into the browser world, but we didn't want to abandon the iSeries and the COBOL language that we developed all of our applications in. LegaSuite GUI empowered us and our customers to leverage existing legacy investments, while taking advantage of Web technologies. And we are continually getting new releases of LegaSuite GUI that will help us improve our applications and help our customers become more efficient," said Stahl.



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