

U.S. State Office of Child Support Enforcement Uses Technology from Seagull Software to Speed Aid to Children



The Child Support Enforcement Office in one U.S. state is responsible for seeking out child support payments from absent parents. To manage cases, the department developed a mainframe-based administration system, which is accessed by more than 800 employees throughout the state.

Challenge

Although the system was functional and reliable, its size and difficult-to-navigate character-based screens were slowing users down. In the pursuit of providing optimal service to their constituents, the department went in search of an affordable solution that would help them refine their existing business processes and enhance the usability of their administration system. "The application is rather large and complex, making it difficult for our employees to use. Approximately 450 screens needed to be modernized and made more user-friendly. We started investigating how we could do that while leveraging our existing investments in our mainframe," said the team leader of the Web development unit for the administration system. Additionally, the solution needed to be 508-compliant and capable of supporting the Child Support Enforcement Office's heavy transaction volume, which averages 900,000 daily.

Solution

After examining several options, the department selected Seagull Software's LegaSuite GUI® technology. 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 mainframe applications. The solution offers dynamic development and deployment technology that empowers organizations to non-invasively deploy their mainframe applications to Windows, Java and HTML environments in a single work effort.

Using LegaSuite GUI, the Child Support Enforcement Office redeployed their administration system with a new, intuitive Java-based front-end, without altering the existing COBOL code in any way. Instead of sifting through complicated green screens in an inflexible, linear order, users are now presented with an easy-to-navigate graphical interface that enables them to progress through the applications more efficiently. Prior to deploying LegaSuite GUI, users were required to type in codes to signify a value on a screen. With approximately 4,000 codes in the system, employees often had to stop what they were doing to thumb through a paper catalog to determine the correct code to type into the field.

LegaSuite GUI enabled the department to incorporate time-saving features into their screens - such as radio buttons and pop-up screens containing lists of codes that help users input or select the right data. "When users aren't sure about what code to type into a specific field, they can click on an icon which brings up a pop-up screen. The screen contains codes for the associated field and provides a description for each, making it easy to determine which code to select. This has been a great tool, especially for new employees who no longer have to struggle with memorizing all of the codes," said the leader of the Web development unit.



"LegaSuite GUI has delivered on all fronts. The technology helped us build a new UI in a short amount of time. It's now faster to train new users, and it has made the job of our field staff easier so we can deliver better quality service."

— Team Leader, Web Development
U.S. State Office of Child Support Enforcement



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Using LegaSuite GUI, the Child Support Enforcement Office created a session history for their employees, enabling them to quickly access any case they worked on throughout the course of the day. "As employees navigate through the system, the case names and IDs are stored in a small session history file that is accessible from each screen. They open their session history, and a record of every case they worked on that day pops up. They click on the case they are interested in, and it's instantly available to them," said the Web development unit leader.

The department also leveraged LegaSuite GUI to automate business processes and improve application workflow. "Previously, if you were in one portion of the system, such as the initiation portion, and you wanted to look at the financial portion, you had to go back to the main menu and start an entirely new navigation. When you did that, you lost the key information that you previously typed in, like the case number or the recipient ID. This required the user to constantly re-enter data," commented the Web development unit leader. By leveraging LegaSuite GUI's drop-down menu feature, the Child Support Enforcement Office created a main menu that allows users to simply click on which section of the system they want to go to. "Employees can now move seamlessly through the administration system, bouncing from section to section without having to stop and type in the data again. It has yielded a significant productivity improvement for us and has also increased the accuracy of case data," said the leader of the Web development unit.

Results

A key component to enforcing child support is the ability to effectively collaborate with other state agencies, court systems and legal partners. Using LegaSuite GUI, the Child Support Enforcement Office provides users with fast, unflinching access to external systems. From a "jump screen," employees simply click on links to jump from one system to the next to gather critical information. "We access eight different external systems. We had this capability before we deployed LegaSuite GUI, but it was so cumbersome that not a lot of people used it. Now they can jump outside of the system and back quickly. Our call center employees rely heavily on this feature, and the new approach has helped them work more efficiently," said the Web development unit leader.

By deploying LegaSuite GUI, the department has accelerated toward their goal of simplifying usability of the administration system, which has led to reduced inefficiencies and increased productivity. "LegaSuite GUI has delivered on all fronts. The technology helped us build a new UI in a short amount of time. It's now faster to train new users, and it has made the job of our field staff easier so we can deliver better quality service," said the Web development unit leader.



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