

Spring Global Mail Migrates its “MailTrack” Application to the Mendix Platform

Challenge

For retailers and other logistic-centric businesses, the escalating expenses of international shipments can represent a significant opportunity to achieve greater efficiency. Spring Global Mail, one of the world’s leading international mail brokers, helps companies consolidate and distribute their parcels and ship them in bulk to streamline processes and lower their costs compared to conventional postal services.

Carefully tracking the thousands of in-transit packages requires a significant and sophisticated IT infrastructure. For years, the company relied on a timeshared, mainframe-based operational control system to monitor all the goods moving through its network. “At any given time, we have dozens of internal specialists tracking thousands of receptacles in as many as 15 different countries,” explained Erwin Serlié, Manager Strategic IT Sourcing and Projects.

“Previously, we managed these logistics on a hosted mainframe application, but we needed to migrate off of that platform. That presented an exciting opportunity for our company to create an entirely new and smarter application driven by business rules and contemporary interfaces and architectures – no more green-screen.”

Solution

For its major software development projects, Spring Global Mail often partners with Mendix implementation partner, Cape Groep, to develop and manage major portions of its IT infrastructure. Alain Frankenhuis, consultant at Cape Groep, noted that the aim of the application rewrite was to quickly and nimbly replicate the functionality of the mainframe application while avoiding a lengthy design/requirements analysis cycle. “We’re proponents of the Scrum methodology,” he said,

“which is why we like to use the Mendix platform for our development.” The Mendix App Platform lets business experts collaborate every step of the application delivery project. Developers start with high-level requirements, share results immediately, get the app in the hands of key users quickly, and iterate until all requirements are met.

“We had already used Mendix for some complex application delivery projects at a sister company, so we knew what it was capable of,” said Serlié. “Mendix opens up a whole new world for us. It is very easy to develop fast, complex solutions and show real business results. It’s an excellent platform for building sophisticated solutions in a very short timeframe.”

In a series of nine “sprints” of three weeks each, the Cape Groep development team created MailTrack2.0, replacing the legacy mainframe system that was originally built 15 years earlier. A second application – IMC – supplemented MailTrack with functionality to calculate cost allocations of shipments. That system was built through seven sprints of three weeks. Both of these applications were integrated seamlessly with the company’s central financial system.

“During our development process, we learned all about Spring Global Mail and its workflows and business processes,” explained Frankenhuis. “We translated what they wanted into what we needed using the visual modeling capabilities of the Mendix platform. This greatly simplified the process of explaining these complex workflows later on.”

Results

“With MailTrack 2.0 in Mendix, we can now manage our routing and distribution structure from a convenient portal,” said Serlé. “We have much more control now, and we replaced a lot of manual work that previously had been done in Microsoft Excel. Our risk is much lower and our error-control is much higher. The user interface is clean, simple, and modern – it’s better-organized around our actual process flows and is a lot more modern than our old system.

“This application is saving us money. It’s less expensive to operate than the mainframe app – and it’s a platform that we can build on for years to come. Because it’s based on the Mendix platform, it’s very flexible and fast to accommodate business needs as they arise.”

In the near-term, Mendix will also play an instrumental role in upcoming application development for Spring Global Mail. “We plan to create a key performance indicator (KPI) reporting app that queries our daily operational data,” said Serlé. “Based on the experiences we’ve had, we plan to make Mendix the foundation of that system as well.”

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Erwin Serlé

Manager Strategic IT Sourcing and Projects

Spring Global Mail

About Spring Global Mail

Spring Global Mail was formed in 2001 and for 12 years has grown to become the largest independent provider of services for global mail, parcels, and returns, efficiently handling package delivery for numerous renowned global organizations. With headquarters in the Netherlands and with 15 offices worldwide, the company focuses on e-commerce logistics, direct marketing, and reverse logistics.



Mendix helps enterprises achieve their digital goals. Our digital innovation platform empowers customers to bring new products to market, digitize customer engagement, and automate unique business processes. Facilitating an iterative, collaborative approach, the platform brings business and IT together to build and deploy innovative applications at the speed of ideas.

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