

Springer Healthcare Prescribes Mendix in Boost to Revenue and Service

Looking to support sales force mobility and on-site customer service, Springer Healthcare re-built an existing database and sales application on Mendix in order to provide unified, multi-platform access. The company has found that the rapid, agile and iterative development process enabled by its use of Mendix is encouraging continuous innovation and ever improving digital services for its sales teams and customers.

Challenge

Healthcare professionals need speedy access to the latest medical research, articles and information. The breadth of content available is vast, while the needs of the reader are often very precise. Springer Healthcare provides customized scientific content using online and mobile solutions that fit the specific needs and objectives of its clients throughout the world.

With a team of more than 200 sales and operations people working remotely via 20 offices worldwide, Springer Healthcare needed to provision staff with unified access to client information, quotes and to a content database of saleable article reprints and books. To support sales force mobility, access needed to be offered via desktop, tablet and mobile devices (Android, Apple, Blackberry and Microsoft-based platforms). The company already offered staff a desktop-only information service. But today's management recognized that a modern multi-channel digital application would be more supportive of real-time, on-site customer dialogues and a drive to increase sales.

"A challenge to our achieving mobility for the global sales team was our development time estimate of 12 months; just to code for the minimum requirement of replacing the existing system," said Joanne Smith, PhD, operations director at Springer Healthcare. "When we factored-in the need for ongoing improvement the idea started to look too lengthy and costly."

Solution

One of Springer's developers suggested the Mendix visual, model-driven development approach. He had used the platform elsewhere to create an application quickly, no coding needed. Springer Healthcare investigated and was impressed with the agile and iterative way applications could be built; innovated step-by-step towards meeting users' needs, then enhanced over time as needs evolve. Scalability and maintainability were also important to Springer Healthcare and proven in Mendix.

"Our existing and aging sales platform presented accessibility issues for our remote teams, so we looked into delivering a modern, multi-channel application," said Smith as lead business sponsor of the project. "We considered various options to build this internally, selecting the Mendix platform for its speed, flexibility, scalability and high industry analyst ratings."

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Ben Franks

Systems project manager, global operations
Springer Healthcare

Results

A team of only two developers, one from Springer Healthcare and another from Mendix implementation partner AuraQ, delivered the application, now known as 'SMART' in just 12 weeks; some four times faster than had been estimated for traditional approaches. In addition to speed, Mendix helped Springer Healthcare ensure high adoption since the platform's visual models helped developers collaborate with marketing, sales and other relevant business units throughout the requirements specification and development process. The development team built small pieces of functionality, engaged with users for feedback and iterated towards testing and production. The target go-live date having been met, users have since been continually encouraged to give feedback, inject ideas and request any changes and enhancements.

Ideas for new and improved capabilities are captured and considered for immediate, short-term or longer term incorporation. 'SMART' has been integrated with SAP CRM (via routines also built on Mendix) and also with the company's project management system, creating efficiencies by eliminating duplicate data entry and streamlining the sales process from quote to invoice. The application today serves some 70-100 users per week, via their mobile devices. Springer Healthcare now considers 'SMART' to be of significant value to the business.

The success of the development has been noticed across the business, stimulating demand for new capabilities and for new applications to be built on Mendix and integrated into 'SMART'. For example:

- "C3" is a database of custom content projects created for customers, which can be re-sold to others. Previously a desktop-only resource, it too has been re-built on Mendix. Sales people looking to serve a customer with topic-specific content can now search both the 'SMART' (articles and books) database and 'C3' database simultaneously.

- A self-service portal into 'SMART' for specific customers is under development, giving them a window into specific content areas relevant to them and a purchase and download facility.
- An internal pricing intelligence application is in the pipeline and a service consolidating industry news alerts is being considered.

With confidence high and Mendix-based work growing, Springer Healthcare needed to expand the development group. But it wasn't somebody skilled at coding that they sought - rather a person who could understand the company's sales and customer relationship management processes and who could express that logic in visual workflows. An individual was recruited internally. Within two months he had become an invaluable member of the team.

Why is development work at the company shifting towards the Mendix platform? According to Springer Healthcare, it's all about productivity and agility:

"The team is flying through developments like never-before, continuously delivering new business and customer benefit," said Ben Franks, systems project manager, global operations at Springer Healthcare. "We're turning ideas into new applications, adding step-by-step enhancements, faster than ever."

"Across the business, people are getting excited, stimulating support for new capabilities and new digital services," concluded Franks. "An ongoing cycle of innovation is helping us improve sales and service and to stay ahead in a dynamic and competitive market."

For the 'SMART' application, Springer Healthcare won the Gold Award (operations category) in the 2015 UK App Design Awards.

For more on Mendix for mobile see: <https://www.mendix.com/application-platform-as-a-service/mobile-paas/>



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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