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Success Story #13

Client

National dry goods transportation firm

Problem

The client needed to track railcars coming into 50 separate yards nationwide and the subsequent unloading of materials from the cars to tractor-trailers for delivery. Traditionally, this was done via a stand-alone Microsoft Access application installed at each site, tracking only the railcars and materials at that location. When necessary materials were unavailable in one yard, scores of phone calls and emails were required to determine if the material could be found elsewhere in the system. In addition, the tracking application was not integrated into the centralized accounting system, so all storage charges had to be calculated manually and shipped to the central office for processing. With only a small IT staff available for software development, testing and distribution, the firm found itself unable to implement a solution to their problem in a timely manner – so they called Business Solutions International.

Solution

After a thorough analysis of existing business processes, it was determined that the client's problem could best be solved with the creation of a web-based application that would allow entry, tracking and querying of railcar data via a central repository. With all of the data in one place, a module could also be built to allow the application to integrate with the accounting system and automate the storage charge process.

Within 12 weeks of the project's start date, Business Solutions' consultants created a custom-designed system that was exactly what the client was looking for, with minimal impact on the company's daily operations. In fact, all that was needed at the individual rail yard level was a one-time conversion and standardization of data for inclusion in the central repository.

The final product allowed the yard-based controllers to search for materials in railcars nationwide, request necessary shipments and submit storage charges to the central accounting system – all via the web. Employee productivity increased, administrative costs were reduced and – since internal staff was involved in the process from the beginning – a sense of ownership and commitment to success was established.

Technology Applied

ASP pages, VBScript, Microsoft SQL Server

