

CITYTECH AND JBOSS HELP ADVENT CONFERENCING DEPLOY JBOSS ENTERPRISE APPLICATION PLATFORM

FAST FACTS

Companies	Advent Conferencing and CITYTECH
Industry	Conferencing/ Services/ Technology
Geography	Chicago
Business Challenge	Needed to differentiate itself from the competition in a commodity marketplace.
Software	JBoss Enterprise Application Platform, JBoss Messaging, JBoss Seam, JBoss jBPM, JBoss Cache.
Benefits	Increased sales by offering a more flexible and customized service; Boosted customer satisfaction by improving provisioning and billing procedures; streamlined internal processes and cut operational costs through integrating customer relationship management, business process management, and accounting systems.



BACKGROUND

As a full-service telephone and Web conferencing service provider, Advent Conferencing offers the latest in secure collaboration technology for businesses of all sizes. It prides itself on being on the technological edge, and delivers the best sound quality and broadest range of features in the industry at competitive rates. Based in Chicago, Advent has a customer base that reaches throughout the United States, and has managed to differentiate itself in a crowded commodity marketplace through a savvy combination of the latest technologies and stellar customer service.

CITYTECH is a Chicago-based consultancy specializing in the design, development, and execution of highly available and scalable enterprise applications. A Red Hat partner, it specializes in JBoss, Java Enterprise Edition (J2EE), and other top software development platforms. CITYTECH's mission is to help its customers achieve their business goals through technology. Founded in 2003, and growing at a rate of 25 percent annually, CITYTECH's success is due to its ability to execute projects using an agile but methodical implementation methodology deployed by small, highly experienced teams of professionals. It forges long-term partnerships with clients and makes customer satisfaction its No. 1 priority.

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-Matt Van Bergan

Chief Technology Officer, CITYTECH
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OPPORTUNITY

The teleconferencing business is increasingly a commodity business. Most market participants offer roughly the same services at roughly the same price points. Mike Swimelar, president of Advent Conferencing, understood that the only way to differentiate his company from the pack of competitors was through technological innovation. By 2006, he was already offering the very the latest in secure collaboration technologies with the best sound quality and richest feature set. Its audio conferencing network, bridges, and processes were the most reliable in the industry. But he was looking for even more of an edge. "I realized there was more we could do," said Swimelar.

"CITYTECH listens to my needs, and is very creative about coming back with ideas, they speak in terms that make me confident they understand my business, and are completely focused on making Advent successful."

Mike Swimelar, president, Advent Conferencing

Specifically, Swimelar wanted to provide advanced account management services to his customers that would enable them to do such things as generate usage reports on the fly; track expenses by conference leader, project, or account; and specify when, how, and in what format they would be billed. He also wanted to streamline Advent's own internal operations. At the time, senior management, sales, marketing, operations, and accounting functions were served by "stovepipe" information systems that fragmented business and operational data in a way that made it difficult to see the big picture.

Billing - the lifeblood of any business - was especially problematic. "We were getting data dumps from the bridge software that we had to manually massage," said Swimelar. "It could take days, sometimes longer, to get customer billing out." In addition to slowing down cash flow, there was no flexibility in tailoring the bills according to customers' specifications. And customers were also demanding more advanced management features that would allow them to track which employees were using the conferencing system, when, and for how long, and give them easy access to other usage and billing metrics. "Our customers wanted more control and visibility into the service, but our existing systems weren't capable of providing that," said Swimelar.



SOLUTION

Swimelar had worked with CITYTECH's chief technology officer, Matt Van Bergan, while at another company. He went to Van Bergan for help developing an integrated Web-based application that would simultaneously meet Advent's internal and customer-facing requirements. CITYTECH used the JBoss Enterprise Application Platform as the basis of a development and deployment platform for building an application the two firms dubbed "Advent Pulse."

To accomplish this, CITYTECH used JBoss Messaging to provide asynchronous communication with the conferencing bridge hardware. JBoss Seam was the basis for the Web application, primarily due to its integrated AJAX functionality. JBoss jBPM was used to model and manage the human-driven business processes. Finally, JCache enhanced performance when communicating to the dedicated conference bridge hardware.

BENEFITS

Today, Advent Pulse provides customer relationship management (CRM), live interface with the conference bridges for billing data extraction, business intelligence, and sales commission management in one seamless application.

The benefits were immediate, and substantial. "We spend a lot less time struggling just getting data into a format for billing customers, and a lot more time on marketing and sales," said Swimelar. Additionally, he said, Advent can provision new customers and fill orders much more swiftly and cost effectively, and provide customers with near-real-time access to usage metrics.

The net result? "Customer satisfaction is much higher, billing errors have been eliminated, and Swimelar is convinced that he's making more sales as a direct result of the new system in place. "Because we're able to deliver exactly what our customers need, and do it flexibly, quickly, and for a competitive rate, it has really made a difference in our revenues," he said.

About CITYTECH, Swimelar said, "CITYTECH listens to my needs, and is very creative about coming back with ideas. Rather than being so acronym-oriented that I don't know what they are talking about, they speak in terms that make me confident they understand my business, and are completely focused on making me successful."

In turn, CITYTECH points back to Red Hat as the ideal technology partner. "With an award-winning organization like Red Hat behind us, and world-class technology like JBoss to leverage for our solutions, we are primed for success," said Van Bergan. Plus, he said, the stellar enterprise support, and the direction laid out by its product roadmap have made JBoss the perfect choice of middleware for many of its clients.





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