

THREAD MANUFACTURER SEWS UP KEY ACCOUNT, THANKS TO WRQ® VERASTREAM™

B2B web app expands business opportunities by providing customer self-service and online purchasing

ORGANIZATION

- Coats North America

BUSINESS NEED

- Meet client demand for online purchasing, inventory status, and customer histories

SOLUTION

- Used Verastream Integration Broker™ to:
 - integrate production and ordering information stored on proprietary legacy applications
 - make integrated information available in a web application

RESULTS

- Self-service to Coats legacy information provided to worldwide users, for greater customer satisfaction
- Order-entry and inventory systems integrated and automated, for streamlined order placement
- Key customer retained, growing significant sales revenue

“If you want our business, do it our way.” That was the challenge to Coats North America, the world’s largest manufacturer of thread for industrial and home sewing. A key customer (a major apparel manufacturer) didn’t want to use Coats’ SKUs (stock keeping units) and part numbers to order thread or check thread prices and availability. Instead, the customer wanted to deal in product descriptions.

They also wanted online purchasing, order status, invoice status, warehouse inventory status, and customer history information available on the web. And the purchasing supervisor at the apparel manufacturer wanted this system to function like a system provided by another thread manufacturer, a major competitor to Coats.

“They wanted it in a specific way. They wanted to be able to check inventory and order our goods in their language, not in the way our order processing system talks,” explained Bart Austin, application development manager at Coats North America, headquartered in Charlotte, N.C.

One Tough Customer

And that’s not all. Coats was under pressure to deliver this functionality in six weeks.

After studying the problem and learning more about the customer’s needs, Coats turned to WRQ® Verastream Integration Broker™ and WRQ Consulting Services for the web application that would provide the desired access.

Verastream Integration Broker provides a non-invasive framework for combining diverse IT systems at the business-process level so they can be reused in meaningful ways. Verastream’s powerful integration engine, database adapters, and technology connectors all work with Verastream’s graphical integration tools,

as well as web-based Java and XML integration tools. The Verastream Integration Broker presents dissimilar components in a uniform way, so you can easily connect old and new data sources—with no impact to systems or users.

Verastream Builds on Legacy Value and Investment

Increasingly, IT executives like Austin choose Verastream to integrate legacy information into new web applications. Why? Retrieving the information buried inside legacy applications can be tricky. Traditional methods like old-style screen scraping and host application re-engineering take too long, cost too much, and in some cases, are too risky. Most IT organizations today are looking for a more practical approach—one that allows them to leave their existing applications intact, while recycling legacy data and logic for new purposes. Verastream responds directly to this requirement.

At Coats, production and ordering information are held in proprietary legacy applications. To accommodate the customer’s demand for custom order information and process workflow, order information is saved in an Oracle database. Because Verastream provides a native adapter to Oracle databases, it can generate a purchase order file that is transmitted over the Internet to the financial applications of the customer’s parent company. The result is true integration of multiple data sources.

Additionally, Verastream provides quick, easy, and direct access to the data on the legacy applications. As is the case at so many other corporations, the days of large project teams and long development cycles at Coats are over. A small team working with Verastream was able to finish this major project in a fraction of the time and at a fraction of the cost previously required. "We were looking for a solution that would be platform-independent and could reside on multiple platforms," Austin said. "Verastream Integration Broker fit perfectly with what we were trying to achieve."

Global Access Via the Web

"One of our advantages was that the databases and the programs were all located on our systems, rather than on the customer's systems," Austin noted. He added that WRQ Consulting Services was able to deliver a complex business-to-business web-access application—which he named "Coats Connections"—that met the exacting specs the customer had outlined.

With the new application, "Users can access the information from anywhere in the world with access to the Internet," Austin said. He gave an example of the warehouses that Coats has opened near clothing-maker operations in Mexico: "Using their terminology, they can go in and look at one of their contractors and say, 'I want to sew here.' Then they click on that contractor and our application automatically aligns the ship-to point. They order the thread in the terminology that they wish to order it in, and the program does a cost-reference against our part numbers, enters the order, and places the order into Mexico." Austin added, "The Verastream application interfaces directly with our order processing system, dumps that data into it, and updates it with order numbers, user, PO numbers, and those kinds of things."

WRQ Consulting Services Undaunted by 'Feature Creep'

Austin said the role of WRQ Consulting Services was critical to the project's success. In addition to consulting, the group provides software deployment, custom programming, and integration. The WRQ consulting experts also team up with business partners around the world to offer a full complement of skills for any integration challenge. The highly trained and experienced WRQ group consists of project managers, consultants, and systems engineers.

"The professionalism and quality of service has been excellent," Austin said. "Under the circumstances—understanding what we needed and the creeping functionality—they went above and beyond the call of duty to solve the problems. And they really stuck with it."

About WRQ

WRQ provides innovative technology for solving the most challenging business problems. For more than 20 years, WRQ has been helping Fortune 500 companies access and integrate information, so they can transform the way they do business. With more than eight million users worldwide, WRQ is one of the top software companies in the U.S. and is consistently recognized for its award-winning products. A privately held company, WRQ is ranked as one of the "100 Best Companies to Work for" by *Fortune* magazine. The company offers its software and services in 51 countries through a global network of business partners. For more information, visit the company's web site at www.wrq.com.



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