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MARK MCGRATH | IS DIRECTOR

Ascent Healthcare Solutions

Ascent Healthcare Solutions implements JDE inventory management solution with RFgen.

At a glance...

Industry
Healthcare

Application
Inventory Control

Environment
Oracle JD Edwards EnterpriseOne v8.12

Running JD Edwards EnterpriseOne, Ascent Healthcare Solutions, a division of the Stryker Corporation, is the leading independent reprocessor of medical devices for top hospitals and healthcare providers throughout North America. Since its inception, Ascent customers have safely reprocessed in excess of 50 million medical devices eliminating in excess of 10,000 tons from local landfills and saving over $500 million from their costs by reprocessing and recycling medical products they would otherwise have needlessly thrown away. Working within strict safety and inspection protocols, Ascent is constantly pioneering ways to safely improve patient care by helping healthcare providers maximize limited resources. For a company like Ascent, 24/7 inventory processing and management is a core business function. Ascent ships 3,000 to 4,000 boxes a day out of two warehouses located in Lakeland, Florida, and Phoenix, Arizona that total 20,000 square feet. A T-3 line between the facilities provides access to their JD Edwards server residing in Phoenix.

The Challenge

Outside influences like corporate mergers and FDA compliance keep Ascent's Director of Information Services, Mark McGrath, very busy ensuring the systems that support inventory management are up to the task. McGrath embraced the opportunity to upgrade Ascent's manual JD Edwards ERP inventory system to integrate with an automated identification and data capture system.

Ascent, known at the time as Alliance Medical Corporation, merged with its competitor, Vanguard Medical Concepts. As part of the system integration process, Ascent needed to implement in its shipping operation an automated identification and data capture system Vanguard already had in place. As a result of the merger and the company's enhanced business model, Ascent needed to support FDA protocols for inventory management. One of those protocols was using a wireless handheld bar-coding system, known as automated and data capture (ADC) for inventory management. ADC uses handheld, vehicle-mounted and stationary computers for data collection from bar-coded inventory over a wireless network. Such systems allow for more precise and timely warehouse management, asset tracking, delivery, sales, inventory management, and other business processes.

While ERP systems support data collection using ADC, incorporating the functionality into an ERP system typically requires a great deal of front-end customization. Many middleware products on the market tend to be proprietary, expensive, and resource intensive. McGrath had limited resources, funds, and time to implement the system. "I had five developers on staff supporting the integration efforts," he said. "We had a two-month implementation time frame and I used up half that time making the vendor selection."

The Solution

Ultimately McGrath chose to work with RFgen JD Edwards Integration Suite on a rapid application development (RAD) effort based on the company's Microsoft Windows-based ADC integration software for JD Edwards EnterpriseOne and World.

"I went down the typical road in the competitive search process, looking at various top integrators." said McGrath. "RFgen seemed to be the solution that made the most sense. Ninety percent of what we're doing is just plug and play."

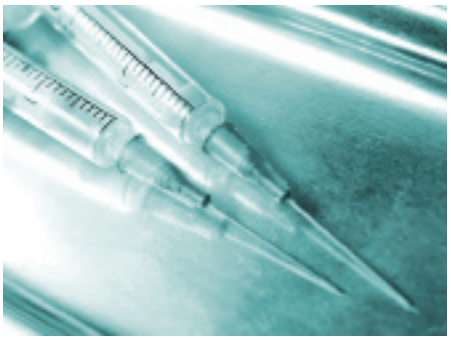
RFgen simplifies the entire development process, enabling developers to bring applications to production more quickly with more functionality and less hand coding. Features such as connectivity management, program flow control, and error handling are built into RFgen, tested, and fully debugged so that developers focus their efforts on the application's logic itself. With the RFgen "Total Knowledge Transfer" program users can take complete ownership of the solution and thereby obtain the lowest total cost of ownership (TCO) in the industry. This approach is perfect for the JD Edwards ERP user who has in-house JD Edwards expertise, Visual Basic programming skills and wants to take complete ownership of the ADC solution.

Using RFgen, developers directly embed the ERP system's business rules as objects in the RFgen application. The ERP system interacts directly with the embedded business objects eliminating the need for additional logic on the ERP system itself. A collection of pre-written JD Edwards open source transaction sets further simplify development and deployment providing developers a starting point for data collection functions. Further, RFgen supports the ever-present Microsoft Visual Basic programming language. "VB developers are very abundant," McGrath said. "We don't do a lot of Microsoft programming now, but in the future we can take advantage of the VB support and provide our own internal development."

RFgen supports 24/7 data collection operation. If the system goes down, local validation tables and RFgen's transaction management server allow users to continue working by validating and queuing transactions for batch processing on the ERP system when it comes back on line.

For the implementation, McGrath relied on RFgen developers to provide the programming manpower. RFgen offers development for a service fee as a standard offering with the software. The client specifies the processes needed then the engineers supply the code. Engineers can dial into the client development environment, update code and trigger testing as needed.

Because half the implementation schedule was used to find a vendor, the RFgen software developers only actually had a month to get the job done. "We were scheduled to go online on a Monday and after several rounds of testing the final code came to us Saturday, 2 days prior. We made our deadline. RFgen developers worked nights and on the weekend to insure that we did," McGrath said.



About RFgen Software

Incorporated in 1995, California-based RFgen Software provides flexible and reliable mobile supply chain solutions that solve real-world business challenges. As a certified Oracle, SAP, Microsoft, Deltek and Vocollect partner, RFgen actively seeks companies facing challenges managing their internal supply chain operations and solves them using real-world experience, industry best practices, and state-of-the-art technology. RFgen's Mobile Framework division specializes in development tools for mobile, wireless and voice environments and provides open standards based connectivity to a multitude of systems (database, SOA, legacy, etc.). RFgen's ERP Integration division focuses on providing certified, open-source transactions and integration expertise for Oracle E-Business Suite, Oracle JD Edwards, SAP, Deltek Costpoint and Microsoft Dynamics solutions.

RFgen's Mobile Framework is an open systems development platform that speeds the path from idea, to proof-of-concept, to solution deployment. RFgen provides built-in, native functionality for extending real-time and on-demand access to enterprise data to almost any mobile device available today. RFgen's Mobile Solutions are currently installed in more than 35 countries, in over 2,600 locations, and are supported by a certified group of over 125 solution partners.

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