

J-Oil Mills web-enabled its business system in an hour with aXes



J-Oil Mills, based in Japan, develops, produces and markets domestic cooking oils, such as Ajinomoto Sara-sara Canola Oil, industrial oil and fat products, health foods, cornstarches and fine chemicals.

J-Oil Mills used aXes to very rapidly provide inquiry and data entry access over the Web to its sales staff on the road and to customer service staff. The aXes solution also played a crucial part in the company's implementation of pandemic countermeasures in 2010, allowing staff who were exposed to swine flu to work from home.

Order and Shipment Data to be Viewed Outside the Office

J-Oil Mills was established in 2004 when Honen Corporation, Ajinomoto Oil and Yoshihara Oil merged their respective edible oils operations. In order to reach synergy in procurement, production, logistics, sales, marketing, R&D and other business areas, the merged company has been working on system integration and restructuring the organization.

With regards to system integration, the sales and administration systems, such as order management and distribution, were consolidated onto IBM i. Manufacturing systems, including procurement and product management, were consolidated onto Windows, as were the financial systems.

The plan for Web enablement came about

in response to a strong request from the users, especially from the sales team, to be able to view order and shipment information from outside the office. Mr. Miyamae, Assistant Manager of the IT department, recalls "Our main focus was how to make it easy and simple for our sales people to view information while on the road, using their laptops."

Previously the company didn't allow their employees to view business data from outside the office, because of security concerns and also the IBM i system's communication speed at that time was not sufficient. This meant that sales people had to call the office every time they needed to check inventory or customer order information.

However in July 2009, when J-Oil Mills decided to upgrade its IBM i server, it was

a good time to review the IT systems and some of the company's related policies. With a focus on improving operational efficiency and moving applications to the Web, three candidate solutions were evaluated: RAMP from LANSA, a similar product by another company and PHP.

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Sudden Urgency

Exactly at the time when J-Oil Mills started to review and compare these products and went through the first few demonstrations, swine flu became a major worry in Japan. People who caught the virus or who had a family member with the virus had to stay at home. Providing staff with Web access, so they could work from home or anywhere else, became a top priority in the implementation of pandemic countermeasures.

Because of this, aXes, a Web enablement tool sold by LANSA partner K.I.S.S in Japan, was added to the shortlist of candidates. "The other three products needed considerable time to discuss in detail with the team. On the other hand, aXes could webify the 5250 screens on-the-fly and as they are, being fully compatible with the current screens. aXes' short learning curve, quick implementation and affordable pricing were also positive factors," says Mr. Moriyama, Manager of the Information Systems department.

aXes was selected and implemented immediately. "Our thought was to start simple with aXes and just Webify the applications quickly, then spend more time later to beautify them with aXes eXtensions or modernize the system further with RAMP, a next modernization step that can re-use work done with aXes."

"aXes installation and implementation was surprisingly quick," Mr. Miyamae and Mr. Moriyama agreed. "About an hour after the installation we could see the screens in a Web browser. aXes automatically recognized the menus and 5250 screens and created the browser GUI, without any manual effort. It



With aXes eXtensions you can take the design and layout of your 5250 application to the next level.

was so quick, that I could hardly believe the implementation was completed properly," Mr. Moriyama added.

The new Web enabled system is not only used by sales people, but also by customer service operators. The version used by customer service is non-customized, with exactly the same fields as the 5250 display, while the version for the sales people has a mask on some of the fields so that they are not displayed.

Ms. Okuni, in charge of the Web enablement project said, "If you are not after fancy screens specially designed for a Web browser, what aXes produces out-of-the-box is sufficient. If needed, you can use aXes eXtensions for a richer user interface or add scripts for automated processing. One day of training was enough to learn how to use the product."

Automatic Reconnect and Screen Control

One of the aXes features J-Oil Mills highly values is the 'automatic reconnect' feature, which the other products examined by the company didn't have. A system's connection can be interrupted for a number of reasons and it usually requires the involvement of a system administrator to re-establish the connection, adding to the workload of both the IT department and the user. However, with aXes users can restart their work from the screen they were at, by ticking the 'reconnect' button on the screen. J-Oil Mills finds this built-in resilience to automatically reconnect after a network interruption very efficient.

Another feature J-Oil Mills highly appreciates is multiple-screen control. Initially the system provided only a single screen per user, but staff at the customer service center requested multiple screens per user to improve the efficiency and usability of the 5250 application. aXes could immediately meet this request as well.

J-Oil Mills had originally planned to use the system for data inquiry only, but usage was expanded to also include data entry. Some of



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the configuration settings were initially not paid attention to, which resulted in problems being reported. "We discussed these issues with K.I.S.S. support, who responded quickly to investigate them and they gave us appropriate advice on how to configure the settings. We are very satisfied with K.I.S.S. support," said Ms Okuni." All the issues were solved quickly and the system has been actively used since implementation."

Access for Business Partners

J-Oil's future plans include using aXes to provide business partners with Web access to its system.

aXes was originally chosen as a data inquiry

solution, just because it met the minimum requirements to quickly respond to the sales team's request for data access from outside the office and because it allowed to quickly establish pandemic counter measures. "However, we would like to continue using aXes since its operation is highly valued by the users. Eventually we would like to move on to the next modernization step, such as RAMP," Mr. Miyamae expressed his hopes. ■

Snapshot

Customer: J-Oil Mills, based in Japan, develops, produces and markets domestic cooking oils. www.j-oil.com

Challenge: Provide sales staff with data access from outside the office, plus allow staff who were exposed to swine flu to work from home.

Solution: aXes provides staff with data enquiry and data entry access over the Web. aXes will also be used to provide business partners with data access.

Key Benefits: aXes webified J-Oil's 5250 screens on-the-fly, had a short learning curve, quick implementation and affordable pricing. The 'automatic reconnect' and 'multiple-screen control' features of aXes are also of value to J-Oil Mills.

Product Used: aXes.



商品情報



• This article is based on a case study published in iMagazine Japan. www.imagazine.co.jp