

Innovation in Software Development at Durham County Wins Best Practices Award

ProGen Plus-Developed iSeries Applications Great for Taxpayers, County

Joe Whittemore's effort to reduce administrative overhead and operating expenses in Durham County, North Carolina culminated in the county's social services unit being awarded the North Carolina Department of Social Services Best Practices Award on November 20th, 2003.



Among the latest in several new applications produced by Whittemore, Manager of Software Development and Support, and his staff, is a social services time keeping application dubbed Daysheets. Event driven entries into Daysheets eliminates redundant input of more than 200,000 time entries each year, making Durham the first county in North Carolina to completely eliminate costs associated with the redundant reporting of staff

time to the state. The Daysheets system, and others, run on Durham County's AS/400, Model 620.

This is one of many new applications developed with ProGen Plus from Business Computer Design, (www.bcdsoftware.com) that is sparking new ideas throughout government statewide on how better software applications and business practices can improve efficiency and the quality of service delivered to North Carolina's citizens.

Carmen Giggey, Senior Programmer/Analyst introduced ProGen Plus to the county a few years earlier. Giggey, who used ProGen Plus before going to work for the county, convinced Whittemore to license the package by writing a sorely needed Register of Deeds Tax history application overnight, a task that would normally have taken many weeks.

If it Pleases the Court

It was referred to as "The ideal system," in a recent letter written to County officials by Kathy

Shuart, Trial Court Administrator for Durham County. According to Whittemore, when the courts needed a new application to track jury duty notices, summonses and other court activity, no suitable commercially available package emerged. Four out of five people who receive notices for jury duty were no shows, and controls were needed to shed light on the problem and ensure diligent follow up. "The Government doesn't have the staff to process 1,000 people that fail to show up for jury duty," says Giggey.

Whittemore cites the reasons for ProGen Plus becoming their core development methodology as its application modeling capabilities, adaptability to the web using WebSmart, and the fact that ProGen-produced programs can be moved from a development machine to a production box and execute without any special run time environment.

Once the court's business requirements were clearly defined, three developers got to

work and in six weeks the application programming was complete on the system referred to as JSS. Giggey explained that the development team ran into several unexpected delays outside of the sphere of development. "The biggest time consuming factor was going through the state statutes to make the application 100 percent compliant with state law," she comments. "Actual coding took virtually no time at all."

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Accountability

JSS has deep functionality for tracking jury duty no shows, and generating reports detailing the reasons for non-compliance. It automatically generates all summoning, monitors moneys due, and manages other tasks, which all contribute to a better turn out rate and significantly lower court administrative costs. In fact, the application developed for the courts became the first in North Carolina to include automatic processing of no-shows. Durham County increased its court count from four to five during the same year the new application was implemented and still realized a significant reduction in juror processing costs.

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be moved from a development machine to a production box and execute without any special run time environment. Moreover, people with other important business skills but minimal exposure to programming can be productive.

Progressive thinking put into motion by Durham's IT department has been the catalyst for praise and change. The state of North Carolina intends to implement a timekeeping system patterned after the one developed in Durham. It's expected to save the state over a million dollars in processing expenses.

Though much of the focus has been on Whittemore, he believes the joint effort of all the IT support areas, Network, Operations and IT management contributed greatly to their success and asserts that his staff should receive the credit.

Durham will soon have two iSeries Model 810s to accommodate present and future needs. Looking forward, Whittemore intends to convert his green screen apps to browser based ones. "I'm looking at creating a familiar look and feel for users. That's where ProGen WebSmart comes in." ProGen WebSmart is BCD's award winning Web and Wireless application development tool and application server environment for iSeries-AS/400 computers. "ProGen Plus has been all that we anticipated and more," says Giggey.

"WebSmart has produced equal praise. Not only will it easily handle our web development needs, we were surprised by all the existing code available."



Over the next five years Whittemore's application development methodology, coupled with a central data repository will extend to all departments that can benefit from it. As the County bridges these homogeneous systems, faster access to needed information and the elimination of duplicated effort will save the county and state even more.



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