

iSeries Pro Ends Billing Crisis, Develops Replacement for Crippled System in Two Weeks

BCD's ProGen Plus Application Development Tool / Report Generator Aids in Rescue

A newly acquired, barely functional billing system kept Red Coats, Inc. from generating invoices for services rendered. Over a three-month period, calls flooded in from customers who asked where their invoices were. With cash flow at a trickle, their coffers were more than \$1 million short of the moneys needed for payroll. Although Red Coats was skilled at cleaning up the messes of others, they seemed to have one of their own now.



Red Coats manages over 40 million square feet of residential, community, commercial, industrial and institutional space daily, stretching from Maryland, down the eastern seaboard to Florida.

Red Coats has also built two other business units over the course of 40 years, Admiral Security Services and Datawatch Systems.

Ten months earlier, Richard Stokes, IS, Director for the company, didn't think a new iSeries based billing system that they had purchased would serve the company's needs. "Our business calls for a job costing system and the one under consideration was general ledger oriented," said Stokes. It was the accounting department's call reasoned top management, because, for the most part, their productivity would be tied to the software's performance.

Until now Red Coats had used CMAS (Construction Management Accounting System), but their needs had broadened, and because there were so many programs to modify to bring CMAS into spec, they elected to find a replacement. The new accounting solution, which was aggressively sold to them by a

formidable iSeries vendor, was to run on their iSeries model 170 but like many of the packages they reviewed, it had no billing module. To solidify the business, a billing module was written by the vendor that ran on a Windows NT machine.

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Eric Figura, BCD Intl. Inc.

Where the Buck Stopped

Following a six month long struggle to get all of the accounting programs working properly, Red Coats cut over to the new system. According to Stokes, "As the weeks turned into months I continued to warn the CEO of the real problems with billing." Three months after the cut over, accounting had only generated one month's worth of invoices. With a

staggering payroll of 6,000 people, they depended heavily on consistent cash flow, and not having any was a problem that landed squarely on the Owner/CEO's desk. In an effort not to miss payroll he infused \$1.7 million dollars into the company's account.

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Richard Stokes, Red Coats, Inc.

Stokes, and other managers were summoned into uneasy meetings and calls were made to IBM. On his way through a corridor to one such meeting Stokes realized that he didn't have much faith in the subsequent solutions that had emerged and decided to clean up the mess himself by writing his own billing module. If he wrote it in RPG/400 though, it could take months. He remembered reading an article on various application development tools and positive comments that specifically pertained to ProGen Plus from Business Computer Design (www.bcdsoftware.com.) "I was thinking I could do this in a couple of weeks with a product like ProGen."

Stokes vividly recalls the ensuing session. "Three quarters of the way through a meeting that was going nowhere I said, I'll write the billing programs for each of the companies. The owner asked how long it would take and I told him I'd have it done in two weeks. You could hear a pin drop in that room it was so

quite." According to Eric Figura, Director of Sales and Marketing for BCD, "Across its installation base of 2,500 plus organizations, development times with ProGen Plus have consistently demonstrated productivity gains of 8 to 20 times faster than manual methods and a very fast ROI."

Right Tool, Right Time

Back in his office Stokes hurriedly flipped through a trade publication and found BCD's phone number. In one day he had a fully functional evaluation copy of ProGen Plus on CD. In his introduction he found quick start exercises covering the design and creation of several different program types. On the first day he developed several sample programs to see what could be done and, at that moment, realized he would be able to deliver on his promise. Stokes was reluctant to call accounting for money since cash was in short supply so he worked out an arrangement with BCD to accept smaller payments over the course of a few months, knowing that soon, funds would not be an issue.

Stokes recalls his long hours at the keys. "For the next two weeks I lived here. In two weeks time to the day I had the billing for the first company fully up and running."

RPG/400 and ILE-RPG are mainstays of productivity. "While there is a need to Web enable many iSeries applications and hundreds of organizations do so with BCD's WebSmart, a significant number of iSeries shops continue to actively develop applications in RPG/400 and ILE-

RPG with ProGen Plus. RPG/400 and ILE-RPG are the backbone of iSeries shops, and account for over 80% of all programs that run on the platform," says Figura.

Invoices Outbound, Dollars In

The twenty users in Red Coat's accounting department were instantly productive. Hundreds of invoices went out to customers the next day and funds swept in. The ROI for new software is usually spread out over several years, but Red Coats had found their justification in just two weeks. Billing modules for Admiral and Datawatch immediately followed.

Red Coats, Inc.

Commercial Cleaning

After the dust settled management came through with a raise for their star IT pro. Stokes humbly adds that now his decisions on matters relating to IT go virtually unchallenged.



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