

Snapshots *in Productivity*



BCD Business Computer Design

Ten Questions for

Paul Feng, Vice President of IT
Spears Manufacturing <http://www.spearsmanufacturing.com>

on

ProGen WebSmart: iSeries-Web application development/deployment tool.

Beginning in 1969 as a one-man machine shop, Spears Manufacturing has become a giant in PVC & CPVC, plastic pipe, fitting and valve manufacturing. Now, Spears occupies over one million square feet of manufacturing floor space in four states. With distribution centers that span the nation and house one of the industry's largest inventories, Spears delivers superior service to all of its customers. An IBM iSeries model 270 hosts the company's critical software systems.



BCD: ***What applications did you develop with WebSmart?***

Feng: "There are several: The first is an Internet accessible Client Information Management System. We needed to allow field technical service people and salesmen to be able to manage information on customer requirements. Then, our Technical Service reps needed a Contact Management system-- their goal is to visit engineering firms and find out what their requirements are so we can generate solutions. The third is an e-commerce system-- a way to let customers place orders and check order status."

BCD: ***What does your computing environment look like?***

Feng: "Our backbone system and database is iSeries based-- a model 270 is hosting the website. We are in the process of upgrading to a 520 because we have lots of new users."

BCD: ***Was any training necessary?***

Feng: "We had a trainer in for two weeks. They were able to help us in areas where we were weak, like HTML page design. Now, all my staff is developing web applications. All the applications I mentioned are up and running; Contact Management, e-Commerce, Electronic Catalog. If you look at our website, it's all WebSmart."

BCD: ***What led to your selection of WebSmart?***

Feng: "We have been a traditional AS/400 shop for many years. The benefits offered by the technology of the Internet pushed us toward opening up our system-- to go beyond running applications behind closed doors.

To start, we looked at WebSphere but we didn't find it easy to learn. We thought it would be too expensive to hire additional people with the skills that WebSphere required so we continued looking and found WebSmart. I downloaded it and I said, OK, lets go for it. It was very inexpensive."

BCD: ***Was WebSmart easy to use?***

Feng: "We had no web experience and now we are writing full-blown web applications."

BCD: ***What are a few things you really liked about it?***

Feng: "It's a complete development tool that allows us to do just about everything we want, even though members of my programming staff are all green screen, RPG Programmers. Our first application, which was an extensive shopping cart, was up and running in only month and a half from the day we started learning it.

Even our racecar team has a shopping cart application on the website that we developed with WebSmart."

BCD: ***Did it generate 100 percent of the executable code?***

Feng: "WebSmart generated all the source code."

BCD: ***Are you using any other BCD products?***

Feng: "I have used Docu-Mint for many years. It's a pretty decent product."

BCD: ***Did BCD's Technical Support team give you satisfactory answers when you called?***

Feng: "They are the best. I can't say enough about them."

BCD: ***What would you like to tell others about your experience with WebSmart?***

Feng: "I would highly recommend it. We jumped on the bandwagon very early. I checked one reference because they didn't have very many customers at the time.

We are running the Original Edition version. Now they have a Java version so you can run it on any platform."