Snapshots
in Productivity

BCD Business Computer Design

10 Questions for

Chuck Ackerman

VP of Information Services
LAMPS PLUS, Inc. http://www.lampsplus.com

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

Since LAMPS PLUS first opened its doors in 1976 it has become the nations largest specialty lighting company.   LAMPS PLUS, headquartered in Chatsworth, California, currently maintains 40 stores throughout the western United States, and over one million square foot of inventory space. To manage its inventory and serve the five million customers that shop at LAMPS PLUS every year, the company uses an IBM iSeries model 820.

LAMPS PLUS.

BCD:	***What types of applications have you developed with WebSmart?***
Ackerman:	"We use it for any new interactive programs-- we don't do green screens anymore."
BCD:	***Why did you choose iSeries hardware to host these applications over Windows or other hardware?***
Ackerman:	"That's where our data is. Our back office applications are all on the iSeries."
BCD:	***Were you able to use your existing iSeries staff and were special skills needed?***
Ackerman:	"I have six programmers using it— no special skills were necessary."
BCD:	***Was WebSmart easy for your iSeries Staff to learn-- did your group receive any training?***
Ackerman:	"I spent about two days with each programmer to get them going. I didn't spend any time training with BCD."
BCD:	***Did you evaluate any competitive products, including WebSphere?***

Ackerman*:* "I looked at WebSphere but it's costly and cumbersome to maintain. I also looked at CGIDEV2 and actually created some pages using it but it's very labor intensive from a programmer's standpoint. Then I tried WebSmart. I got my first application up in two hours. It is very easy to use. It looked polished right out of the box and was running with a sub-second response time in only a few days. By the end of the second day I created the Purchase Order for WebSmart."

BCD: ***Do you feel your selection of WebSmart saved your organization time and/or money over WebSphere?***

Ackerman: "It saved a lot of time because WebSphere is hard to administer, and we saved money because we didn't have to upgrade the machine. I was afraid we were going to kill the system with WebSphere."

Furthermore, "WebSphere was too hard to manage and maintain. It was a real hog. The CPW rating just to bring up WebSphere was more than our whole AS/400."

BCD: ***Have you received feedback from users or upper management?***

Ackerman: "Everybody loves it."

BCD: ***How does WebSmart play into your future development plans?***

Ackerman: "Websmart is core to our future. All new interactive programs will be programmed exclusively in WebSmart."

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

Ackerman: "I had a great experience. We really enjoy this product-- I tell lots of people that all the time. It makes it easier from a programmer's standpoint to make sure that valid data is put in by customers and salesmen. We use drop down lists instead of letting end users enter any item."

BCD: ***If you were to give WebSmart, and Technical Support a grade on a scale of A through F, what grade would you give them?***

Ackerman: "The tech support is by far the best I've seen in the industry. They are professional; someone always answers the phone, and that person almost always has enough knowledge to answer your question. They don't have to refer you to someone else or call you back— they answer your question right then and there. That's really refreshing."