

# PRO DUCTIVITY



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Report

Case Study *Software that makes the most of people and computers*

## WebSmart Replaces Domino Order Tracking, Saves Money

*Electrical Manufacturer/Distributor Builds New Web Interface to BPCS*

A turnkey web-based customer order tracking system built for less than \$30,000 with ProGen WebSmart from Business Computer Design ([www.bcdsoftware.com](http://www.bcdsoftware.com)), is replacing a Domino-based system that would have cost over \$100,000 just to migrate to a new iSeries machine from an AS/400.



Shortly After EGS ([www.egseg.com](http://www.egseg.com)), a \$500 million dollar electrical component supplier and manufacturer, inked a deal with IBM to consolidate their operations from five AS/400s down to two new large iSeries machines, the true cost of the migration became apparent. Consultants came in and started modifying the Domino-based, third party software solution used to serve a web customer order tracking system which was wired to their SSA Global Solutions, BCPS ERP system, and it quickly became evident that, between

additional license fees and consulting charges, the cost of marginal progress would be astronomical. With the meter running, "It looked like we were going to spend in excess of \$100,000," commented Doug Long, Vice President of Information Systems at EGS, "...and we would have had a new version of the same software."

Long inherited the Domino-based system when he began working for EGS in 2001, and asserts that it fell short of his expectations. "It wasn't on my watch," he adds. The Domino-based system was developed specifically to web enable iSeries-AS/400 ERP systems, and could only be maintained by vendor technicians imbued with Domino skills. Since these skills were in short supply at EGS, they would still be on the line for vendor-supplied services far down the road. Adding to ongoing costs, EGS had to pay maintenance fees for the Domino server and the web-based order status application as well.

Emerson Electric, one of EGS's parent companies, and Long's employer from 1994 to 2001, fervently recommended an e-commerce portal alternative from

Click Commerce, Inc., but the fees associated with it were daunting: "Two hundred thousand to one million plus for all the bells and whistles," states Long. "We thought at that point we would just keep what we had."

Don Erickson, EGS's Manager of Information Systems, recalled another solution that they had not yet investigated. In his initial research Erickson learned that ProGen WebSmart cost only a fraction of what they were going to spend on migrating the Domino solution over to the new hardware. For less than \$20,000, WebSmart would be a bargain compared to the \$400,000 invested in the existing package three years earlier plus the upgrade and services fees now being incurred.

WebSmart is a complete, yet flexible solution. The Interactive Development Environment (IDE) allows programmers to design browser-based applications and extend the functionality of existing RPG-based programs.

*For more information on ProGen WebSmart and other BCD software solutions, log in at [www.bcdsoftware.com](http://www.bcdsoftware.com).*

The IDE includes more than 70 templates that address different business requirements and reduce programming effort. The built in language, ProGen Macro Language (PML), gives developers a way to customize these applications. PML incorporates several programming aids like pop-up info boxes with the names of valid objects that can be specified for various parameters, on the fly HTML editing, and more.

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*Don Erickson, EGS’s Manager of Information Systems*

WebSmart’s iSeries-based Web Application Server (WAS) runs the ILE CGI generated programs that take full advantage of RPG IV features. Developers can also deploy their applications as Java Servlets using the optional JSE component.

### **Hands On**

Erickson downloaded a fully functional demonstration copy of WebSmart from BCD’s website. “In three to four hours after installing the product I had developed a working application that mirrored one of the Domino production applications,” he commented. Predominately schooled in AS/400-iSeries technologies, Erickson had accomplished this without any prior knowledge of website development and no training.

The ensuing decision process was short: Long and Erickson decided to purchase the product before the close of business that day. With a license fee well below what Long had budgeted for, he decided to have BCD write the application and provide training to EGS’s IT staff so they could use the tool effectively. “The risk in switching over to WebSmart was minimal,” states Long.

Erickson emailed the BPCS file layouts pertinent to the order status/inquiry system to BCD, who then got going on the specs, and a functioning prototype modeled after their Domino-based system was completed in 30 hours of development time. In another 25 hours, BCD was able to incorporate all of EGS’s changes and return a production version.

The secured site primarily facilitates order and inventory inquiry. Clients can also check open invoices. It supports different functionality for customers, whose searches are limited to a customer number, and EGS staff and administrators, who are allowed to view any customer. A special query function for sales managers allows them to review activity limited by territory.

Order inquiry is searchable by order date, order number and purchase order number. EGS users can select from a pop up list of specific customers for review. Refinements include drill down capabilities for order inquiry that allow users to view specific items in an order and the status of those items. If the items have been shipped, users can see the shipping detail or drill down to access a UPS tracking number.

### **Better Performance**

Performance improvements over the Domino-based site are numerous. One example of this is in how the WebSmart developed site features a drop down box that makes sorting and viewing orders easy. Previously, users were required to select a different link for each.

Long notes, “The price of the software and the services involved in doing the initial website with WebSmart was less than \$30,000, with the license fees being a one time charge. Initially, I had budgeted \$40,000 and expected to exceed it.”

The new hardware and extranet site will be online by February 2003. As for future plans, Long comments, “Sales Order Entry will come after we implement Order Status. We will develop this ourselves.”

Over time, using WebSmart will save money and give EGS more freedom over browser based interfaces to BPCS. Long says, “The revelation with this product is that it’s a phenomenal piece of software that came up very quickly and very inexpensively.”



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