

Snapshots in Productivity

10 questions for...

Read the compelling stories of IBM iSeries – System i professionals and their candid answers to 10 questions about their experience on rapid iSeries - Web Application Development. Click on "more »" for the complete Q & A's. A quick read that's worth your time.

Mitsubishi Fuso Truck of America, Inc.- www.mitfuso.com

Susan DeFrance, Senior Programmer / Lead Analyst



Mitsubishi Fuso Truck of America, Inc. offers a complete line of light and medium-duty cab over trucks to the North American market.

These products are sold through more than 170 dealers in the US and Canada. Mitsubishi Fuso's IT infrastructure is supported by IBM iSeries hardware that runs internally developed business applications.

BCD: What types of applications are you developing with WebSmart?

DeFrance: "We are writing an entire new dealer service and order entry application in WebSmart, not just the Web front end. We are generating RPG-CGI programs. WebSmart is producing both the batch applications and Web based ones. In short, WebSmart writes the RPG and the HTML for you."

BCD: How did you come upon WebSmart?

DeFrance: "I looked to IBM's iSeries Developer Roadmap, which we aspire to follow and saw that IBM listed WebSmart. I called BCD and they said all I really needed to do was download the tool and I would soon be developing web applications. I thought, no way! I have 25 years of RPG experience and zero exposure to web development. I downloaded WebSmart and soon found out that BCD was right! I couldn't believe it... I went through the WebSmart tutorial and started writing web programs."

BCD: Did you evaluate WebSphere or any other products?

DeFrance: "I was directed to find a solution that would best fit our company. Price was not the deciding factor. "I looked at WebSphere, IBM HATS, and Lansa. HATS was absolutely nuts. It took over a month just to configure it and I attended a training class! Then we tried Lansa. They didn't want to let us have a demo copy - we were supposed to just buy it. Eventually, they gave in but we discovered that just setting up their repository was a big job so we passed."

BCD: Were there other key reasons for selecting WebSmart?

DeFrance: "Absolutely, I've discovered over the years that good technical support is critical to the success of any product. I called BCD's support line for assistance with a test project I designed. Within a couple of days I had it up and running. Before I even bought WebSmart I was given complete access to any of BCD's developers and support staff. That gave me a warm feeling."

BCD: Did you choose to attend WebSmart training?

DeFrance: "Yes, I attended a training class on Vancouver Island, British Columbia for a week and really got a lot out of the class. When I returned to the office I taught a few other programmers over the course of two days. We also participated in a three-day web conference."

BCD: Did BCD's services group do any custom development for you?

DeFrance: "Yes, the single sign on was a real challenge but they assimilated our design and gave us just what we wanted."

BCD: Did you do any ROI analysis on WebSmart?

DeFrance: "Yes, the outlook would have been far different without WebSmart. Our costs would have been far greater with Lansa in part because it would have taken more of our time, and we would have had to outsource more of the development. And if we would have chosen HATS, I don't know when it would have ever been done."

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

DeFrance: "Who knew I'd be writing Web programs so fast. The common perception is that web development is for kids fresh out of college, but after only a short time my web programs aren't just good, they're full of timesaving bells and whistles! I have a lot of experience, I love RPG and I'm very good at what I do, and now I'm getting pretty good at web development, too!

BCD: Would you recommend WebSmart to anyone wanting to develop iSeries – Web applications?

DeFrance: "Yes, I've already recommended it to others. One in particular had a scenario that mirrored ours—they have programmers with lots of RPG experience but no web experience. I told them WebSmart was easy to learn."

BCD: If you were to give BCD and WebSmart a grade of A to F, what would it be and why?

DeFrance: "An A! I believe BCD and WebSmart are as good as it gets. I made the right decision going with BCD. We're on track and having lots of fun building our new applications."