

A-Plant

Verastream boosts productivity and consolidates systems through a flexible web services business model.



Overview

A-Plant is one of the largest plant, tool, and equipment hire companies in the United Kingdom. This organization is part of a larger company, Ashtead Group Plc, a FTSE 100 company. A-Plant has over 165 service centers in the UK and close to 3,300 employees.

Challenge

With a rental fleet worth £700 million and a new rental transaction every 2-3 seconds, A-Plant relies heavily on its IT systems to manage its processes. A-Plant uses a custom-made UNIX-based system to run the core of its business (ERP systems, finance, etc.). Although this is a

high performance system, it was also developed over 20 years ago, so its user interface is a character-based green screen.

Andy Wortley, A-Plant IT Director, explains the issues associated with this: "The interface is not user friendly and appears quite old-fashioned, especially to young new starters in the business, making adoption of it hard. It is also difficult to introduce new functionality into the system and we were finding ourselves developing separate Windows-based solutions to cover this. This means that we had to access different core systems when completing a rental agreement, a situation we really wanted to avoid. Ashtead is an acquisitive organization and, as we integrate new companies, we find we are actually replacing graphics-based systems with our green-screen system. This is necessary as all our corporate info is housed there, but it is not a popular decision. It was time, therefore, for us to look at options to modernize our system."

Replacing the system with a commercial solution was not possible, as it's so bespoke to the rental business.

Solution

OpenText™ came along just at the right time and introduced Andy to the capabilities of OpenText™ Verastream Host Integrator. With



At a Glance

- **Industry**
Business Services
- **Location**
UK
- **Challenge**
Modernize a green-screen core business system to enable faster rental transactions and integration with new technology, while maintaining optimum system performance and leveraging existing business processes and source code.
- **Products and Services**
Use Verastream Host Integrator to present the system in a user-friendly Windows environment through Web services.
- **Results**
 - + Rental transactions completed twice as fast
 - + Optimum system performance maintained
 - + Key new system functionality introduced
 - + Platform for future integration and enhancement

"The partnership with Micro Focus (now part of OpenText™) was really invaluable. We worked on the design of the interface, while OpenText™ helped us with the back-end integration. From our proof-of-concept it only took us 2-3 months for the new version to be in Beta-testing, which is a great achievement."

ANDY WORTLEY
IT Director
A-Plant

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ANDY WORTLEY
IT Director
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reuse at its core, OpenText™ Verastream makes legacy applications available to a range of modern devices, without the need to change valuable business processes or source code. A proof-of-concept soon showed A-Plant how a working model of the core business application could be built, and then served up in a Windows environment through web services.

Wortley comments: “Verastream Host Integrator was just what we needed. We really didn’t want to risk breaking our backend logic, and with Verastream there was no need for this. We could open our core system up to other applications, modernize our interface, and integrate with newer technology, all whilst building on what we already have.”

The interface modernization reduced a five-step rental process to a single screen which means rental transactions can be completed in half the time. New functionality was introduced such as a complex pricing algorithm and route optimization that transport charges dynamically calculate.

A-Plant worked closely with OpenText™ professional services throughout the implementation. “The partnership with Micro Focus (now part of OpenText™) was really invaluable. We worked on the design of the interface, while Micro Focus (now part of OpenText™) helped

us with the back-end integration,” says Wortley. “From our proof-of-concept it only took us 2–3 months for the new version to be in Beta-testing, which is a great achievement.”

Results

The project is still in the early stages, but Wortley says the new system has had tremendous feedback already: “Once they see what the Verastream system can do for them, people just want it straightaway. When the roll-out is complete we expect a ramp up in new functionality requests, as the possibilities with it really are endless and your imagination is sparked once you start working with it. Thankfully, the system was built with flexibility in mind and we can see how the integration process can really pick up speed as completed projects become building blocks for new initiatives, so there should be no problem in keeping up with demand.”

Wortley concludes, “This has given us a great productivity boost, both on the IT/development side and the sales side. New recruits need little or no training on the system and are productive straightaway. We can see massive scope and potential for the future and look forward to our continued partnership with Micro Focus (now part of OpenText™).”

Learn more at
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