

Sage

AcuToWeb delivers familiar functionality and mobile accessibility in a modern interface, opening up new market opportunities

Overview

Sage is the market leader for integrated accounting, payroll, and payment systems, supporting the ambition of the world's entrepreneurs. Over 13,000 Sage employees support millions of entrepreneurs across 23 countries as they power the global economy.

Challenge

Sage develops and markets the largest market share payroll application in South Africa. Over 22,000 customers rely on the **ACUCOBOL**-based application, developed over the last 30 years. During its lifetime, the application was continually updated. It now contains 3,500 screens, over 800 separate programs, and five million lines of code.

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ANNETTE VILJOEN

Director Product Engineering
Sage

Customers love the functionality, however, surveys showed its user interface was regarded as outdated, something Annette Viljoen, Director Product Engineering at Sage South Africa, was keen to address: "We needed to modernise but this proved a challenge. Sage has stringent design guidelines we needed to comply with. Unfortunately, **ACUCOBOL** could not support this. We briefly considered rewriting the application, but estimated that would take us at least five years. Time to market was of the essence; we had a matter of months to modernise our application in accordance with Sage branding and design guidelines."

Solution

Sage's very specific requirements were met by early access to the Micro Focus **AcuToWeb** product. This is designed to instantly transform **ACUCOBOL** applications to HTML5 web pages and deliver an improved and consistent user experience across desktop, web, tablet, and smartphone devices. Viljoen comments on the implementation process: "Micro Focus bent over backwards to ensure we made our deadlines. Working with a pre-release version can carry risk, but we were so well-supported during the implementation that we actually felt it was a huge benefit to us. **AcuToWeb** was easy to install. I loaded the new version onto my machine and generated and compiled the program files. It took me less than an hour to



At a Glance

■ Industry

Software and Technology

■ Location

South Africa

■ Challenge

Sage needed a user interface modernisation to remain competitive. With thousands of screens and stringent corporate design guidelines, it needed an improved and consistent multi-platform user experience.

■ Products and Services

ACUCOBOL-GT
AcuToWeb

■ Success Highlights

- + Web-based, design-compliant, version of 30-year-old application deployed within three months
- + New sales increase of 13% over target and migration of existing customers over 60% of target
- + 20 percent batch performance improvement
- + Flexibility to respond rapidly to business requirements through Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)

“We took our software, developed over the last 30 years, and from the exact same code base created this contemporary AcuToWeb solution in less than three months. It has helped us streamline our development processes, deliver a modernized user interface that our customers love, and has given us the flexibility to respond faster to business and design requirements.”

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setup **AcuToWeb** and have my old COBOL screens running in a web browser.”

Once Sage started working with **AcuToWeb** the team realised that interface modernisation was not the only benefit. In the previous system, if a change needed to be made, it had to be addressed across 3,500 different screens. With **AcuToWeb** cascading style sheets, a modification is made once and applied instantly across the entire system, resulting in much reduced system maintenance.

Customers would install the previous system on a server and operate them via remote internet sessions. On the African continent, internet connections and infrastructure stability are not always reliable. Connection errors could easily result in file corruptions in the payroll application. The new **AcuToWeb** version of the application is web-based. It can be accessed from any hardware, including tablets and mobile devices.

Viljoen explains the significance of this: “With our new web-based application, support can be given remotely, through a simple log-on process, rather than onsite, involving extensive travel. Payroll administrators can access their records via tablet from anywhere, making life easier and aligning much better with today’s remote working practices. File corruption is a thing of the past now.”

Processing speed is key in a payroll application, especially around peak times such as

tax reporting. COBOL is one of the fastest programming languages and Sage was concerned the new **AcuToWeb** system might not be able to match its performance. “In fact,” Viljoen remarks: “we noticed a batch performance improvement of at least 20 percent. This already significant increase will improve even further when the general **AcuToWeb** release will add 64-bit support for a faster user experience.”

Results

The **AcuToWeb** solution has recently been deployed to the market and is already exceeding expectations. New sales are 13 percent ahead of target and the upgrade schedule for existing customers is nearly 60 percent ahead of target.

Viljoen is delighted: “We took our software, developed over the last 30 years, and from the exact same code base created this contemporary **AcuToWeb** solution in less than three months. It has helped us streamline our development processes, deliver a modernized user interface that our customers love, and has given us the flexibility to respond faster to business and design requirements.”

She concludes: “Micro Focus was with us every step of the way, delivering exceptional support. This is a true partnership. Not only did we get to use brand-new **AcuToWeb** features, but we also influenced the product roadmap as a result of our close collaboration. The ease of accessibility has opened new markets for us and we are excited about the future.”