

Industry:

System Integrator

Organization:

Noblestar

Description:

Noblestar is the leading provider of technology-based business solutions designed to unleash performance improvement, competitive advantage, and market value. With their team of experienced business and technology experts, Noblestar develops solutions with best-in-class technologies and processes.

Business Problem:

In addition to dramatically improving the efficiency of the Web development process, Noblestar needed to provide more Web autonomy to local offices, while maintaining consistent branding across all company sites.

Rational Solution:

Rational Suite ContentStudio™

Key Benefits:

A More Efficient Workflow – With role-based distributed workflows, Noblestar can publish content without wasteful bottlenecks.

More Effective Processes through Easy Customization – Rational Suite ContentStudio provided Noblestar with simple Web templates, empowering Noblestar's Web team to customize project and publishing workflows to match how they work.

Unified Management of Code and Content – Noblestar gains appreciable efficiencies in managing the generation, interaction, and automatic deployment of application code and content under a single platform.

Rational and Noblestar

Noblestar's Recipe for Success in Content Management

Shopping for IT solutions can be a lot like choosing a restaurant. There's a variety of options from mass-produced fast-food to elegant fine dining, with many in between. In a grueling, competitive market, successful business integration firms like Noblestar realize they can't offer cookie-cutter solutions. Each clients' tastes and needs are unique, requiring a personal touch. Customers want to know more about the ingredients and who's doing the cooking before they'll sit at the table.

As the leading provider of Web development and integration services, Noblestar has all the ingredients for success — an accomplished staff, best practices for ensuring clients' success, and experience with the myriad of products and solutions that can be brought together to help in specific client engagements. But in a challenging market where the personal touch is needed, Noblestar wanted to empower its local offices to have a Web presence reflecting their strengths and unique service offerings.

According to Pauline Weger, Chief Marketing Officer at Noblestar, "Our regional sales teams need to drive prospects to the site that reflects local partners, local client examples, and local staff talent."

Yet Noblestar faced the challenge of achieving the following:

Unified Web Presence – Noblestar needed to maintain one corporate Website rather than separate sites for each of its ten global offices. As a growing services firm, Noblestar wanted to avoid supporting separate sites, striving to maintain their corporate identity and empower local offices. According to Weger, "As CMO, I need to preserve our corporate brand, but be sensitive to each location."

Efficient and Distributed Content

Development — Noblestar faced the challenge of establishing an efficient content development and management process. Achieving the ability to manage submissions from up to

300 contributors in six different languages by a Web team of only eight requires minimizing process. Noblestar's "real objective was to distribute content development responsibility. Contributors anytime, anywhere needed to provide up-to-date content," according to Weger.

A Stable, Scalable Environment for Growth

The Noblestar Web team also faced the challenge of growing their Web presence through future Web initiatives including an intranet portal and a customer extranet application. "We knew we couldn't plan the rollout of our intranet portal until we had something to manage content better," said Weger.

In order to keep the Web team and content developers on the same page, Noblestar recognized they needed a single solution to manage content approval, development, and deployment processes. Also, they required a solution that could seamlessly manage and deploy both their Web application code and their content assets.

Why Rational Suite ContentStudio?

In response to its needs, Noblestar made a list of requirements for their Web content management solution, including:

- Flexible, distributed workflow – to streamline review cycles while ensuring content accuracy
- Web-based and simple – to enable all contributors to work efficiently from any location using their browsers
- Extensible and scalable – to grow the scale and scope of the site without concern for stability
- Strong version-control – to securely store all Web artifacts in one place and to enable site rollbacks when needed

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- Easy management of code and content – to provide one unified platform for code and content authoring, approval, and deployment
- Low Cost – An affordable, open solution that wouldn't lock them into an expensive, proprietary development model

Weger describes the excitement when the Noblestar Web team learned of Rational Suite ContentStudio; “their eyes lit up, because the solution is based on proven technologies bundled together. Our people are real believers in Rational ClearCase®, Rational ClearQuest®, and Rational RequisitePro® [integrated tools that are included in Rational Suite ContentStudio]. This combination gave us a huge degree of confidence that it would work.”

Once the decision was made, the Noblestar team quickly implemented a working demo in just a few days. “I did more with Rational Suite ContentStudio in three days than I did in three months with a different vendor,” said Chris Walters, Senior Software Engineer at Noblestar.

Making a Content Management Solution Real

At the beginning, Noblestar used Rational Suite ContentStudio to help manage the re-implementation of the corporate site, enabling them to quickly develop requirements and manage changes during the project. The product includes Rational ClearQuest which allows rapid definition, assignment, and monitoring of site updates and changes. In addition, Noblestar manages the project workflows for Web development as well as directed content changes, all within Rational Suite ContentStudio.

Implementing Flexible Workflow for Content Contributors

The Noblestar Web team wanted to make it simple for content contributors to update content autonomously. They used Rational Suite ContentStudio to develop both the contributor applications (creating ASP or JSP templates that allow easy input of content changes) and the related presentation templates.

“Based on the sample templates included with the product, we customized a workflow with our own look and feel. The templates are based on your role and the type of content you wish to submit,” said Walters.

When a content change is needed, an authorized Noblestar employee navigates to a book-marked location on the Web, logs in, and edits the text portions of the templates. Once a change is made, it is submitted and enters a pre-defined review cycle workflow. If the reviewer(s) approve the piece, it can be deployed to the live site. This approval workflow means that the Noblestar Web team no longer has to “touch” every single change to the site. Once content is approved it can be automatically deployed.

“Without our new workflow in ContentStudio, literally, the designer, Webmaster and I could be involved in each detailed change to the site. With Rational Suite ContentStudio, at the click of a button, I can approve changes. By reducing the review and approval process, I can spend time doing other things,” said Weger. Such simplicity empowers all users to contribute with little need for training or adaptation.

Now Noblestar's contributors can post everything from white papers to job submissions on a daily basis. To keep the process running smoothly and quickly, Rational Suite ContentStudio includes custom workflow features like e-mail notifications to alert team members to their next task. This was crucial in streamlining their authoring process. Depending on the participants and tasks, Noblestar can distribute editing and approval tasks with the appropriate permissions without requiring real-time collaboration or Web team involvement to complete the work.

With their newfound efficiencies, Noblestar expects to slash their authoring process cycle time by 50%. Such a reduction will prepare the current Web team to manage 400% more content volume, freeing them to manage their upcoming intranet portal and customer extranet initiatives. Additionally, Rational Suite ContentStudio allows the international offices to manage their own content development and approval work flow.

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Pauline Weger,
Chief Marketing Officer
Noblestar

Empowering the Web Development Team

While content contributors benefit greatly, Noblestar's Web teams benefit from being able to easily configure content contributor workflow capabilities. Noblestar's Web team can customize these workflows, adapting them to how they work, assigning appropriate roles and permissions. This enables contributors to, for example, make on-the-fly changes to workflow without having to go to the Web team. Essentially all contributors and members of the Web team are on the same page, yet able to work independently in an efficient process.

Managing both the content and the code that governs and formats that content is crucial for cohesive content management. Noblestar's proposed Career Site application demonstrates the impact of a unified management system. This application depends both on the code that processes job applications and requests as well as on the input of job descriptions content. "The career section is going to be extraordinarily dynamic. Each of our ten locations has different requirements. Standard job descriptions can rapidly be adapted and posted since virtually anyone can be a submitter. That's an added value for us," said Weger.

Managing Change for Continued Success

Noblestar needed version control for their site to prevent lost changes and wasted time. "We needed versioning and rollback. In other products we evaluated, it was difficult to find version control near the complexity and scope as Rational ClearCase® LT [included with Rational Suite ContentStudio]," said Walters.

"The ability to track and archive publications, along with the ability to unpublish and republish content was very important," said Weger. With improved archiving, Noblestar can further reduce inefficiencies and prevent needless mistakes.

Saving Time with Automated Deployment

With scores of changes submitted to Noblestar's Website, deployment alone could be a monumental task. Rational solves this problem with NetDeploy, an integrated deployment tool that schedules and automates Web deployment. NetDeploy automatically deploys scheduled content and code directly from the common repository, removing needless effort for manual file transfer to the Web server. All deployments are tracked and logged accordingly. For teams accustomed to manual or FTP changes, NetDeploy dramatically reduces deployment efforts.

"We liked the variety of ways we could trigger and schedule deployment. We could automatically deploy bundled content and applications, while archiving expired content," said Walters.

Meeting Needs Today and in the Future

Noblestar needed an open, and scalable system that could grow with its needs. Because Rational Suite ContentStudio is based on an open architecture, authoring templates can be built in industry-leading ASP or JSP. "The templates are JSP or ASP, so I can use Microsoft or Java technology to build into the templates whatever I want. That was very important," said Walters. Rational's open standards approach means that Noblestar has more choices as it implements new functionality.

As an open platform, Rational Suite ContentStudio is compatible with the leading Web and application server platforms like Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS), BEA and Apache Server products, protecting Noblestar from shortages of technical expertise. Such compatibility ensures extensible application development and scalable growth of Noblestar's Web presence. "Everything I've seen out of Rational ContentStudio, it's going to be more stable and extensible than anything we've looked at," said Walters.

"With our current infrastructure, we couldn't fathom such a huge initiative without something like ContentStudio. We feel you brought together the right pieces at the right price to get us where we need to go."

Pauline Weger,
Chief Marketing Officer
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Beyond Noblestar's corporate site needs, the company is extending the use of the Rational Suite ContentStudio to support key consulting practice areas, most notably their wireless practice. To demonstrate their prowess, Noblestar is developing a Web-based WAP emulator for their Website. Using Rational Suite ContentStudio's ability to bundle code and content seamlessly, Walters' team can easily manage changes to WAP-enabled application initiatives, increasing their effectiveness as sales tools.

Moving Forward

Working with Rational Software, Noblestar is achieving its goals and initiatives. With Rational Suite ContentStudio, Noblestar wields

the content management capability to accelerate their corporate Website, intranet and extranet initiatives. Given Rational Suite ContentStudio's stability and scalability, Noblestar is confident that they can execute on their current and future Web initiatives as the site expands.

"With our current infrastructure, we couldn't fathom such a huge initiative without something like ContentStudio available. We feel Rational brought together the right pieces at the right price to get us where we need to go," said Weger.

About Rational Software Corporation:

Rational Software provides a software development platform that improves the speed, quality, and predictability of software projects. This integrated, full life-cycle solution combines software engineering best practices, market-leading tools, and professional services. Ninety-six of the Fortune 100 rely on Rational tools and services to build better software, faster. This open platform is extended by partners who provide more than 500 complementary products and services. Founded in 1981, Rational is one of the world's largest software companies, with revenues of \$796.7 million in its twelve months ended September 30, 2001, and over 3,800 employees worldwide. Rational is a component of the Nasdaq-100 Index®. Additional information is available on the Internet at www.rational.com.

Additional Rational success stories and video clips are available at www.rational.com/success.

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