

MD Success Story



Beverage industry applications developer reaps dividends after replacing legacy change management

VIP Upgrades to Midrange Dynamics Change Management – Gains Great SQL Handling and Cross Referencing, Saves Money

Any software company that develops mission-critical applications for its customers knows reliable change management software (CMS) is essential.

That's certainly the case with Vermont Information Processing (VIP), a developer of

software applications tailored to manufacturers and distributors in the beverage industry.



With over 300 customers, including over 50 percent of all major beer distributors in the U.S., VIP must ensure its warehouse management, route accounting, financial, CRM, mobile, and other critical applications run smoothly. But VIP ran into challenges when its legacy CMS package, implemented in 2001, became less

reliable and significantly more costly to maintain and manage. Troubles began when another software company purchased the vendor that supplied the CMS used by VIP. Soon afterward, updates became rare and quality of support began to decline.

"Despite the headaches, we didn't relish the process of finding and migrating to another change management package, so we kept developing workarounds," says Brian Garland, lead software developer and source control administrator at VIP. "Over time, this approach became unsustainable, and it was clear we needed a new solution."

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Brian Garland, Lead Software Developer and Source Control Administrator for VIP

After evaluating the available options on the market for IBM i change management software, VIP chose MDCMS from Midrange Dynamics. "We gave each vendor a number of very specific requirements that we wanted demonstrated, but in the end, it was Midrange Dynamics that covered these the best," says Brian.

"Midrange Dynamics also made it clear from the start that they were willing to work closely with us to ensure the product would fit well in our unique development environment and that we would receive responsive support. Considering our previous experience, these were critical factors. But the frosting on the cake was the price of MDCMS—the cost of software plus three years of maintenance was nearly equal to what we were paying for annual maintenance with our legacy CMS."

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VIP had some particularly demanding requirements that MDCMS covered well, but there were a few elective features VIP hoped to find in a new CMS package that were not part of MDCMS. Specifically, these were features that would more flexibly resolve conflicts that arise around objects belonging to multiple versions of the same application. What especially pleased Brian is executives at Midrange Dynamics expressed interest in adding those capabilities. This led to a discussion about Brian and his team participating in a collaborative process to help enhance MDCMS with the desired features.

“Everyone began to see that all parties would benefit by collaborating on the development of enhancements that VIP was interested in,” says Michael Morgan, a founder and managing director at Midrange Dynamics. “VIP agreed to help test a beta version of the new release in some of their development environments, which in turn would expedite the inclusion of these features in a new version of the MDCMS to be installed at VIP. It turned out to be great collaboration.”

“Although it impacted our original implementation schedule, it was definitely worth the extra time to work with Midrange Dynamics to help design, test, and therefore benefit from enhancements that would streamline some key processes for us,” adds Brian. “We really appreciated the willingness of Midrange Dynamics to work with us to include these new features; it was very much a win-win for both companies.”

Another thing that impressed VIP was Midrange Dynamics’ MDXREF cross-referencing tool, which was included with its purchase of MDCMS. Cross-referencing, the ability to see the effect of a program change across all application objects, was an essential requirement for VIP; in fact, cross-referencing issues had been a particularly sore spot with its legacy CMS.

“We were regularly having to do workarounds and create exit points to make up for inaccuracies, but with MDXREF, all cross-referencing functions worked accurately and smoothly,” says Brian. “And it was particularly beneficial to us that MDXREF included some great features for SQL, which our previous product didn’t accommodate.”

Migration of historical change data was another big requirement for VIP, and Brian was pleased that MDCMS included a number of useful data migration tools. “We absolutely needed to preserve our change history, and many of the other vendors we looked at didn’t include history-migration tools,” says Brian. “Had we chosen to go with another vendor, we would have likely needed to implement a lot of manual processes to accomplish this essential migration. An added plus for us was a ‘rollback’ function in the migration tools that came with MDCMS. This allowed us to fully test the migration before pulling the trigger. We extensively used the rollback function, testing different areas of the migration multiple times. In the end, everything worked beautifully, saving us countless hours and headaches.”

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Brian Garland, Lead Software Developer and Source Control Administrator for VIP

With MDCMS streamlining software change management processes at VIP, Brian is more than pleased about the decision to select Midrange Dynamics, and this satisfaction includes his experience with customer support.

“We’ve consistently gotten rapid, helpful support from Midrange Dynamics,” says Brian. “This stands in sharp contrast to the support we experienced from our legacy CMS vendor, which toward the end of our relationship was slow and sometimes even non-existent. With Midrange Dynamics, we often receive bug fixes within 24 hours, and responses to support questions get taken care of in less than an hour or two. On all fronts, working with Midrange Dynamics has been a refreshing change from our previous CMS vendor. We couldn’t be happier about our decision.”

Resources:

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