DaimlerChrysler Services Fleet Management drives real-time success with Progress®.

CASE STUDY

CHALLENGE

DCS Fleet needed to automate key business processes, improve customer service, and enable real time data sharing between DCS Fleet and its customers and partners.

SOLUTION

A real-time application network based on Progress® SonicMQ® and Progress® Sonic ESB®.

WHY PROGRESS® SOFTWARE

Progress would ensure a fast implementation and its scalability, flexibility and reliabity were industry-proven.

BENEFIT

DCS Fleet now has a centralized vehicle information system, has increased order creation by 85 percent and boosted order capacity by 30 percent. Customers manage administrative tasks, which helps to improve efficiency and increase cost savings.

DaimlerChrysler Services Fleet Management (DCS Fleet) has mobilized a pan-European convoy of 335,000 vehicles in less than four years—managing fleets ranging from 50 to thousands of vehicles. Now DCS Fleet is fueling up to blow past the competition.

GETTING INTO THE DRIVER'S SEAT

From leasing corporate cars to delivery trucks, passenger vans, and buses—the fleet management industry continues to grow based on a simple principle: Companies need trusted transportation to conduct business, but that does not mean they want to be in the transportation business. To save money, minimize liability, and stay focused on their core competencies, fleet operators often turn to an outside firm to buy, maintain, and replace their vehicles.

In Europe alone, vehicle fleet leasing is a multi-billion dollar industry. DCS Fleet, for one, is not solely relying on its namesake pedigree to dominant the vehicle leasing market in Europe. Instead, the company has mapped out its future course based on Progress Software-enabled online services and a robust information management system.

Soon after DCS Fleet opened shop, it was on the fast track toward success. Operations and employees, however, were bogged down by inefficient systems. Although DCS Fleet was growing 30 percent each year, the applications that managed customer quotes, contracts, and reports were behind the curve. Customer accounts—including warranties, insurance policies, and service records—were maintained within an expanding patchwork of incompatible databases and static paper files.

The result was that customer service fell below DCS Fleet benchmarks. Customer consultations—from providing quotes to placing orders and setting up contracts—took nearly a half hour. Then it could take up to another 48 hours to create the actual contracts. Contract changes did not appear in the system for at least half a day. And finally, it could take five days to generate fleet reports. Meanwhile, DCS Fleet partners could not effectively exchange information with the company because of inconsistent data formats and lag times.

To navigate these challenges, DCS Fleet switched gears in 2000 to improve customer service and information management. "We had many different systems, so we would have to manually reenter customer information from one database to another," says Cristof Thomas, IT director of DCS Fleet in France. "When customers made inquiries, we had difficulty providing a standardized, accurate level of information because their data was not consolidated in one place. Customers expected more flexibility and transparency, as well as world-class management of their fleet."

"We decided to stay with Progress, because it was easy to implement and it had already proved its value."

— Cristof Thomas
IT Director
DCS Fleet France

HANDING OVER THE KEYS

DCS Fleet decided to use a two-pronged IT strategy to enhance operations and customer service:

eBusiness. Roll out new services, such as online quotations, and create a user-friendly Web interface for fleet managers to access account information and update contracts on their own.

Infrastructure. Integrate all online applications into a coherent management system that eliminates redundant data entry while providing users with up-to-date information about fleets.

Starting with the office in France, DCS Fleet used Progress to rebuild its information-management engine. First, Progress SonicMQ enterprise message server was deployed to help ensure the reliable exchange of mission-critical information. Then, Progress Sonic ESB was used to create "the nerve-center" of the system, establishing flexible XML standardization of data exchanges. The new architecture enabled DCS Fleet to offer an online tool dubbed PowerFleet that lets fleet managers create driver records and car policies; process contract modifications; view surveys of their fleet; consult vehicle statistics; and access a library of contracts and other information.

When DCS Fleet began the architecture overhaul, the company aimed to migrate to a real-time, online system to bolster efficiency, cut costs, and drive more business. In the past three years, transaction volumes have grown by 300 percent. And while 2.5 million messages have been transmitted over the system, no information has been lost in the shuffle.

DCS Fleet had finally pulled ahead. "We benchmarked other solutions and had planned to build other prototypes," Thomas says. "But when we finished the Progress implementation, we decided to stay with Progress, because it was easy to implement and it had already proved its value."

OPERATING IN THE FAST LANE

From the back office to the customer desktop, DCS Fleet now offers sleek online services that have caught the eye of the industry. On the heels of the integration, DCS Fleet has received several awards, including best company of 2002 by *Automobile et Entreprise*.

But the real rewards are under the DCS Fleet hood. Thanks to Progress, order processing has gone up 30 percent without increasing staff. Real-time reports are automatically generated versus being manually culled from numerous cross-organization spreadsheets—saving the

company US$75,000 annually. DCS Fleet customers now handle most administrative tasks themselves, and fleet managers receive auto-reminders of steps they can take to keep their fleet roadworthy. The company and its partners also can seamlessly swap information, saving time and money.

Now that the test in France has crossed the finish line, DCS Fleet plans to use its Progress architecture as a blueprint for other European divisions. With help from Progress, DCS Fleet, like its customers, can now stay focused on its core business. "We can process information in real time, so several tasks are accomplished in 50 percent of the time it used to take," Thomas says. "It is all harmonized, so we have saved a lot of time and money."

ABOUT PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (Nasdaq: PRGS) provides application infrastructure software for the development, deployment, integration and management of business applications. Our goal is to maximize the benefits of information technology while minimizing its complexity and total cost of ownership.

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