

De Agostini and NIIT Technologies Join Forces to Provide Mission Critical Application Re-development



De Agostini is the leading Partwork publisher in the UK with its head-office in Milan, Italy. Founded in 1901, the group employs over 2000 people and publishes in 33 countries. Consolidated net revenues for the entire De Agostini group amount to €2.9 bn.

De Agostini has a range of products that are published either weekly or bi-weekly and build into a complete work of reference on a given subject. Partworks deal with subjects ranging from art, history and geography, to cooking guides, DIY and language learning, from computer courses, cinema or music collections, to multimedia educational series for children and teenagers. The main points of sale for such products are newsstands and kiosks.

Business Need

De Agostini had three core applications that required re-writing and supporting in .NET technology. These applications, originally custom written, remain the most important part of the business systems as a whole. The applications are closely coupled with each other, the two largest of which are used for sales forecasting and financial reporting.

A further application provides the framework for creating Partwork products, specifying their particulars and modelling their lifespan. Once completed, calculations can be made based on quantities and costs, to provide a projection of how successful a product might be. This is vital to the organisation as the popularity or uptake of a Partwork publication determines print runs, cover mount manufacturing, and the overall profitability of the launch.

The Solution

The product now provides an easy yet comprehensive method of projecting sales of Partwork publications. It has an intuitive user interface that makes viewing, comparing and projecting sales curves very simple. Sales can be modelled and changes can be made to the model to produce a favourable result, in a feedback loop. It also provides guides for production quantities and costs, which are then fed back into the other core applications.

Another core application is focused upon operations, and manages;

- Bills of Materials (BOM)
- Purchase Orders and Invoice Matching
- Stock Control
- Print Orders
- Publishing Schedules

This application interfaces directly with the accounting system to create accounts data for new products and purchase orders and to retrieve exchange rates and supplier data. All specific production costs, quantities and billing information are stored here as well as some editorial and marketing information, enabling the update of models in real time (via data exchange) and therefore integration with marketing and production.

These applications will be centrally managed in the UK, and used by De Agostini offices in France, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Russia, Greece and Japan. Each geography has taken delivery of these re-written applications, many with local enhancements to cover geography-specific requirements, such as interfaces to local finance packages.





Choosing NIIT Technologies as a Technology Partner

Nick Mison, IT Director, explains his decision to partner with NIIT Technologies was due to "the availability of a large talent pool of motivated professionals coupled with low cost and fast turnaround time, which enabled us to deliver on our global IT strategy. NIIT Technologies' dual shore model provided us with an answer to our concerns regarding managing the process between London and Bangalore and any worries we had were soon alleviated during a visit to both Delhi and Bangalore to review offshore facilities."

He continues, "We have recognised the importance of all people involved in this project and as such have implemented reward and incentive schemes. These aim to provide recognition for the offshore staff and also promote awareness about the contribution that their effort has upon the IT systems within De Agostini."



Benefits

- By partnering with NIIT Technologies to re-develop their core applications, De Agostini has saved an estimated £2 m on the re-write project
- The business has significantly reduced risk, by investing in .Net technology, and moving away from aging applications that were not future proof
- Today, using NIIT Technologies as an extension to their own IT Department, De Agostini has the flexibility to scale their IT requirements up and down, in line with the business needs, without impacting on existing workloads. They are also confident of keeping abreast of new technologies and best practices
- The business is much more flexible, offering regions the functionality of the core systems and the flexibility to make regional variations. Code tuning has enabled one of the regions to increase the number of jobs to be processed so significantly, they have reduced one-man month of work down to one day

To recognise the efforts of those individuals involved, De Agostini Incentive Awards and Extra-Miler Awards are presented quarterly to the offshore team

- De Agostini has saved 50% per annum on ongoing support costs

The Future

Hot on the heels of the migration project, De Agostini has decided to grow their engagement with NIIT Technologies still further with a re-write of their web applications. The applications serve as a suite of reporting tools that interface with the core applications.

These web applications cover a group reporting tool and an online subscription system, and are used by a selection of De Agostini's geographical regions.

Phil Aston, IT Business Manager comments "The web applications are an integral part of De Agostini's internal reporting mechanism, facilitating the centralisation of product information and key performance indicators and providing a platform to share this easily throughout the group."

He continues "The group reporting tool is critical to De Agostini in that the financial data captured here is reported back to head office in Italy on a monthly basis and indicates the level of product success across the globe."

Aston declares "Given the positive impressions I have from working with NIIT on the current .NET migration project, it seemed sensible to further our relationship by kick starting these web projects with them as well."

With both parties investing time and effort into building a long and successful partnership, De Agostini can be confident of a strong future.



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