ALLIED ELECTRONICS & CONNX CASE STUDY

Since 1928, when it was established as the radio parts distribution arm of the Columbia Radio Corporation, Allied Electronics has been providing excellence through customer service. Now, as part of the Electrocomponents Group of the United Kingdom, Allied has added a global presence to its customer orientation. This combination of Allied's commitment to a high level of customer services and Electrocomponents' global reach ensures a powerful solution to meeting all present and future customer demands.

Industry
Electrocomponents Distributor

HQ
Fort Worth, TX

Solutions
CONNX DB Adapters

Highlights

♦ Using CONNX, Allied Electronics Web-enabled a new quote taking system for 70 branch offices

The Team That Got Results

Thomas A. Edison would have been proud. When Allied Electronics, an electrocomponents distributor in Fort Worth, Texas, came to CONNX with the spark of an idea about how to increase sales at the 70 branch offices scattered throughout the US & Canada, there was electricity in the air.

The idea was to create a quote system that could use Allied data stored in an RMS database running on a VMS server. The Allied Quote system enables managers, salespersons, credit managers, and product managers to communicate through Web forms using ASP.NET technology. Through the forms they are able to produce new quotes for customers, get management approval on certain quotes, have a contact database, provide a way for the various users to register inventory checks, and create orders, among a long list of other activities. "Our main interest was to capture data that was

getting lost during phone conversations with customers, and also to be more responsive to the changes in our entry process. Gathering all the data on our quotes would give us a lot more information, . . . allow our salespeople to dispose of their need to keep voluminous files on all of their customers, but also keep information about what our customers order and would like to order, why we are or are not converting quotes to orders, and general trends in pricing and what we are selling," says Alan Bruns, IS Director at Allied. Easy deployment and the ability for Allied's developers to maintain the project after the project was complete was a requirement. ASP.NET was selected as an effective technology to achieve these objectives. CONNX Solutions and Allied worked as partners in creating a detailed specification that involved examining over 20 years of a rich and complex existing code base.

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CONNX

2039 152nd Avenue NE
Redmond, WA 98052

Phone: 425.519.6600
Email: info@connx.com

About CONNX
CONNX Solutions is a leader in data access, migration, integration, virtualization, and replication. Their solutions enable quick, secure, and scalable SQL access to legacy, non-relational, relational, and cloud data wherever it resides, however it is structured, without any change to your core systems. CONNX is quick and easy to set up and use and offers easy standards-based tools that are accessible, flexible, and scalable.

Since 2001, CONNX solutions have been installed in more than 3,200 organizations worldwide and across a range of industries including government, manufacturing, education, technology, human resources, financial services, and telecommunications. CONNX's solutions unleash the power and value of information, providing organizations the ability to make confident, evidence-based business decisions.

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Allied's part in the initial stages was to validate the documentation of the business rules. As Brun says, "The first thing was to enumerate what they were, so that we at least had a chance to carry them out in the new code. It was necessary to dig through the existing code, decide what the current business rules were, and then discuss them amongst us here at Allied, and decide which ones we wanted to carry out and which ones we wanted to toss away."

The final product is divided into several basic areas that enable Allied sales people to track their current contacts, enter new contacts, record customer needs, perform product entry, perform credit checks, arrange shipments of any sort, arrange pricing and discounts, and manage approvals, among other things.

The approval rating of the quote system is very high. According to Bruns, "My impression is that the people who are really most important in this are the hierarchy in sales. . . we're generating orders, we're generating quotes, we're generating a lot of data that's going to be very useful to us..."

As for return on investment, Bruns says, "How do you put a value on a contact database? Pretty tough!...Give us six months...and we'll have a good start on a contact relationship management system....that'll save us a whole bunch of bucks just like that."

Ken Messer, IS Manager at Allied, found that the new Web application helped save them money in unexpected ways. "We're able to flag every shipping address as to whether it's a residence or not... we'd been getting hit for large amounts of money for delivery of packages to residential addresses... as many as 100 a week... we're talking many, many thousands of dollars. I'm thinking that in one year's time, perhaps a quarter to a third of the cost of the original project could be recouped."

Another benefit of the new quote system is that it increases accountability within the organization. As Bruns says, "The communications between our purchasing departments and sales departments is much, much better since using the quote system. I think anyone that's been involved with the quote system has a much better feel that we're all working to achieve the same thing...it helps our folks to respond more quickly...people have a lot better handle on what's going on with their quotes."

JoAnn Santos, Allied Electronics Branch Manager in Seattle, says that, from the user side of the quote system, things couldn't be better. Since managers in the system can easily access their salespeople's quote lists, she can cover for them if they're out and can take incoming quote requests more easily. "I can easily see how many quotes we entered into the quote system today, I can see how much volume we're quoting, and it gives me a

ballpark of what our sales figures are going to be for the day... and I can get a feel for what's going on. I didn't have any such visibility before...the salespeople really like it...it saves time...it's very easy to use."

As the project neared completion, there was some concern about whether Allied would be able to continue with the system without continual CONNX support. This worry was quickly allayed the closer and closer it got to completion. "Handoff was so smooth," says Bruns, "One big goal in this project was to be, at the end of it, able to do without CONNX as much as possible, and we have achieved that goal to where we're maintaining the software, we're making changes to it, ...but if we needed specific help, I would call CONNX again."

Both Messer and Bruns believe they found such a team in the Professional Services Division at CONNX. In addition to recommending CONNX to any other business interested in reengineering legacy applications or any other new possibilities, Messer says, "...We always got all the answers we needed, and I feel that (we, ed.) are the best of friends. It was a great partnership.

About Allied

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About CONNX

CONNX Solutions, Inc., with its flagship software product, CONNX, brings EAI/universal data access technology to over 3,000 organizations worldwide by enabling access to all enterprise data, regardless of origin, through one interface. The company maintains strategic relationships with industry-leading organizations including Microsoft Corporation; Oracle Corporation; Sybase Inc.; Informix; Computer Associates International, Inc.; IBM Corporation; and Compaq Computer Corporation. Founded in 1989, CONNX remains locally owned and managed through its headquarters in Redmond, Washington. For more information, contact CONNX Sales at (425) 519-6600, or visit our Web site at www.connx.com