



Microsoft Customer Solution Midrange Migration Case Study

Agilysys..

Customer: Agilysys, Inc.

Web Site: www.agilysys.com/hospitality

Customer Size: 1,345 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Hospitality

Partner: LANSA

Customer Profile

Agilysys, Inc., based in Cleveland, Ohio, is a leading provider of innovative IT solutions to corporations and government, with special expertise in markets including retail and hospitality.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition
- Technologies
 - Microsoft .NET Framework 3.5
- Third-Party Software
 - Visual LANSA

For more information about other Microsoft customer successes, please visit:
www.microsoft.com/casestudies

Hospitality Software Provider Boosts Popularity with Move to Microsoft .NET

“In every request for proposal we see, it’s clear that customers are expecting to acquire a .NET solution. We don’t want to miss an opportunity.”

Tina Stehle, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Agilysys Hospitality Solutions Group

Agilysys, Inc., a solution provider to the hospitality industry, sought to grow its market share, but the company’s core software only ran on System i and Visual Basic, a drawback for customers on the Microsoft® .NET environment. Agilysys needed a cross-platform solution and chose the LANSA. The new system provided complete functionality and offered customers improved agility and more features.

Business Needs

Agilysys provides one of the world’s most popular integrated hotel and casino property management solutions. The company’s Lodging Management System (LMS) is a property management system that automates every aspect of hotel operations, from reservations to credit card processing. More than a billion room nights worldwide have been booked through the LMS solution.

The original application was developed by IBM in the RPG language for deployment on the AS/400—now the IBM i—running on IBM Power Systems. In the 1990s, this was a sound business decision, when the IBM midrange computer was a popular business

alternative to the more expensive mainframe and when more cost-effective choices, such as Windows Server®-based computers, were not as scalable as they are today.

In 2004, Agilysys acquired the LMS solution and the company that provided it. Agilysys saw the limitation of offering the solution only on the System i platform.

“We saw resistance to the System i,” acknowledged Tina Stehle, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Agilysys Hospitality Solutions Group. “Smaller properties weren’t familiar with it and found it hard to embrace. The graphical interface that people expected was tough to deliver

LANSA

Microsoft®

effectively on the System i. We were even having trouble finding top-notch professionals with System i backgrounds.”

Agilysys began moving LMS to the J2EE environment to capitalize on in-house experience. “But we didn’t see a cohesive story with Java, including broad integration with enterprise software and maximum productivity,” says Criss Chrestman, Vice President, Software Development and Services of Agilysys Hospitality Solutions Group. “That’s when we began to look at the Microsoft® .NET Framework. We realized that application development would be faster and easier, we could integrate with Microsoft desktop and server software and productivity tools, and we could create a services-oriented architecture (SOA) that would give customers maximum flexibility in how they used the solution.”

Solution

To develop its new generation of property management system called Guest 360°™, Agilysys turned to LANSAs, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner. The LANSAs development platform for .NET was the ideal choice for Agilysys.

“System i developers who know RPG code are being asked to move from a top-down language to the open object-oriented environment of .NET,” says Greg Best, Vice President of Business Development, LANSAs. “It’s a different world of event-driven programming and graphical user interface design. LANSAs makes it possible for RPG developers to take advantage of as much of their existing skill set as possible as they make that transition.”

The rewrite of its hospitality software was the largest project Agilysys had ever undertaken,

and company executives were conscious of the need to reduce risk and ensure success.

“We wanted to come to market quickly, but we also needed to do it correctly,” says Chrestman. “Our product is sophisticated, with more than 20 application areas and hundreds of modules. Our research showed that larger projects—those involving more than 100 years of developer time—had phenomenally high failure rates. We wanted to control that risk, so we chose productivity frameworks that held the project under 100 years without limiting functionality or sacrificing architectural sophistication. By using frameworks, you reduce project time. In the process, you also improve communication, quality, and supportability. The new solution is built to scale to support the largest hotels in the world.”

To further increase its chances for success, Agilysys adopted a series of best practices, including maximum reuse of code and functionality, speed of development, and a flexible architecture. LANSAs provided functionality to facilitate reuse of code, as well as integration with Microsoft Web services and the Windows® Presentation Framework that also made up crucial parts of the new solution.

Guest 360° is now in production use and is in a successful test at a major new hotel in the southeastern United States.

Benefits

Using the .NET and LANSAs frameworks brought benefits to Agilysys even before the software made it into the hands of customers.

“Time to market was crucial because the market had moved to Windows and .NET.

Every additional day that it took us to deliver the solution was another day we lost potential sales,” said Stehle, who estimates LANSAs helped Agilysys bring Guest 360° to market 50 percent faster than it otherwise would, saving more than a year, and, more importantly, improving quality and enabling the company to capture additional sales.

“In every request for proposal we see, it’s clear that customers are expecting to acquire a .NET solution,” she says. “We don’t want to miss an opportunity. Offering a .NET-based product and being able to bring it to market quickly means we’ve missed as few opportunities as possible.”

Agilysys began to see increased interest in its product as soon as the new version was announced. “Every hospitality customer is looking for agility and the ability to meet new business demands quickly,” says Chrestman. “The .NET Framework gives them those capabilities.”

For example, Chrestman sees the move to .NET making it possible for Guest 360° to integrate with the full range of Microsoft Office solutions and extend to include mobile environments. Microsoft also gives customers flexibility where they often need it most—in the datacenter.

“With Guest 360°, we’ve assumed we have to fit into datacenter models that might arise over the next 20 years,” he says. “The use of .NET and the SOA structure help guarantee that Guest 360° gives customers that flexibility.”