

Modcomp in the Services Sector

USER STORY

BCIS



BACKGROUND

The Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) is a trading division of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Business Services Ltd. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) represents 110,000 members worldwide and is the leading source of land, property, construction and related environmental knowledge to professionals in the property industry.

In the UK, 90 of the top 100 quantity surveying firms use BCIS services, primarily for construction cost-planning. BCIS collates and analyses data submitted by members of the service and incorporates material from other relevant sources to provide capital and maintenance cost information to the construction, property and insurance industries as well as the general public.

Online subscribers can access cost information for a wide range of commercial, industrial, residential and public sector buildings. This includes capital cost information as well as maintenance management information for building maintenance, property occupancy and refurbishment costs.

THE CHALLENGE

Although BCIS had provided an online information service for many years, the system was slow and user-unfriendly, relying on DOS operating systems, dial-up modems, and a high degree of user familiarity. Because of this the take-up was relatively low with many subscribers preferring to receive paper-based publications and reports.

With the emergence of web technology in the late 1990's and its subsequent spread and ease of use for nearly all levels of business, BCIS sought to improve its own online service. The initial plans were to modernise the existing application by completely rewriting it, however the costs and time involved made this unfeasible. So, BCIS looked for an alternative web-based solution, both cost-effective and easy for users of all skill levels to operate well.

THE SOLUTION

Modcomp was recommended to BCIS' Technical Director, Ian Pegg, and following a successful "proof of concept" he appointed the company as preferred supplier in December 1999.

Using Modcomp's middleware integration server ViewMax, which rapidly integrates legacy business systems with the web without requiring time-consuming modifications, BCIS was able to launch its new online service within a matter of weeks rather than months. ViewMax was used to drive and access the DOS applications via a web browser, enabling users to realise immediate improvements to the accessibility of the online service.

“I was very impressed with the speed at which Modcomp were able to launch the new site,” reflects Ian Pegg. “The team were very easy to work with and the product was technically excellent.”

During the “proof of concept” phase Modcomp had demonstrated that it could offer more than the initial web-enabling solution required, and would also be able to support BCIS with its longer-term ambition to update the legacy software. As the popularity of the new online service rapidly grew, it became clear that BCIS and Modcomp would need to start the next phase of the project quickly, to ensure user scalability.

BCIS selected Macromedia (now Adobe) ColdFusion as the most appropriate application server software for its future needs, and, using ViewMax to interface with the remaining legacy systems during the process, Modcomp was able to undertake the migration without any disruption to the service, completing the transition within a year.

Since then, Modcomp has been continually working with BCIS to expand the site and develop new functionality and services. In 2004 Modcomp developed BCIS Rebuild *Online*, a service which enables surveyors to calculate the total cost of rebuilding a property. This has also been used to create a rebuilding cost calculator available on the main BCIS site for general users.

Most recently Modcomp developed and implemented a range of web services for BCIS using the SOAP protocol, making it possible for desktop applications (such as cost planning software) to access BCIS information directly over the Internet. The web services also allow BCIS to receive data from subscribers online as opposed to relying on paper submissions previously used.

Now in 2009, Modcomp continues to support and enhance the application almost 10 years after having first worked with BCIS.

C O N C L U S I O N

Since the new site was launched, BCIS has seen such a considerable increase in subscribers that the online service is now its most dominant product offering.

Users not only benefit from the speed and ease at which they can access and download information from the site, but also from the additional tools and services made available using the updated web technology.

Both BCIS and its subscribers have benefited from the improved information flow between them – the site relies on subscribers supplying much of its data, and this can now be done simply via the internet.

“In our very specialist application area we were delighted to find a company with the tools and expertise to migrate our application to the web in manageable and affordable steps,” says Ian Pegg. “We found that we were able to work well with Modcomp at both a technical and commercial level and will continue to work with them to develop further enhancements to the service in the future.”

A B O U T M O D C O M P

Modcomp has been providing data acquisition and system integration solutions for over thirty years, to a wide variety of markets as diverse as retail, financial, government, aerospace, energy, utilities, factory automation, broadcast and communications. Modcomp is an international company with a world-class reputation for bringing quality, high-performance innovations to its customers.

Modcomp Ltd
12a Oaklands Business Centre
Oaklands Park
Wokingham
Berkshire RG41 2FD, U.K.
Phone: +44 (0)118 989 3843
Fax: +44 (0)118 989 3847
Web: www.modcomp.co.uk
Email: info@modcomp.co.uk

German Office:
MODCOMP GmbH
Oskar-Jäger Strasse 125-143
D-50825 Köln
Germany
Phone: +49 221 954 46660
Fax: +49 221 954 46661
Web: www.modcomp.de
Email: info@modcomp.de

Corporate Headquarters
MODCOMP Inc
1500 S Powerline Rd
Deerfield Beach, FL 33442
U.S.A.
Phone: +1 954 571 4600
Fax +1 954 571 4700
Web: www.modcomp.com
Email: info@modcomp.com