

Existing IT systems were struggling to support the complex business structure, constantly changing range and fast expansion of this high street clothing retailer. DB Consulting used an agile approach to deliver a set of .NET applications to support business efficiencies and enable faster growth.



Background

This innovative high street retailer operates a distinct business model based on a combination of opportunistic buying and no-frills stores, and unlike most fashion retailers who buy four times a year, buyers constantly scour the globe to deliver the best deal for customers. With direct relationships with thousands of brand owners and suppliers worldwide, there is inevitably a highly complex planning and logistics operation just to get product to stores. Store efficiency is also demanded to keep costs down and pass the savings back to customers.

Business Issue

With a complex business structure and fast-moving range, IT systems simply could not support the company's growth plans quickly enough in the UK and Europe, and new store openings were taking far too long. The business already had a huge reliance on a number of complex applications developed using Excel and SQL Server.

The Challenge

To build a an integrated suite of .NET applications to help support business growth, particularly in the areas of Merchandising and Buying.

Solution

Working at pace and using a distinctively agile approach, DB Consulting quickly established via a series of sharp, focused workshops the requirements list (the 'product backlog') and, after determining and building a sound technical architecture, embarked on a rolling programme of business applications development.

A large number of complex applications were already in use, mostly developed piecemeal using Excel and SQL Server. All new applications were developed using the most appropriate technology; some as enhancements to existing applications, some using the VSTO architecture, but with the majority developed from scratch using .NET framework.

The first of these applications was designed to replace a suite of Excel spreadsheets used by the Store Planning teams. The new application provides users with the ability to set weekly shipping targets by department and store, and to track week-to-date distribution against those targets. Building the tool in .NET provides users with a more scalable, robust and flexible tool that not only addresses their immediate performance issues, but also allows more complex new features to be incorporated.

Results

The first .NET application was delivered very quickly, with only three (monthly) Agile iterations. Using an agile approach meant users could continue with their day-to-day roles whilst being able to provide constant feedback on the additional enhancements needed. The original workshops created a list of requirements that were compiled into a development list, which is now prioritised by both region and functionality to help identify the features that will deliver the greatest business benefits.

DB Consulting

DB Consulting works with ambitious, forward-thinking companies aiming to achieve strategic business objectives through the deployment of modern Information Systems.

We design, build and support software for companies operating in a wide range of industries, using technology products from Microsoft, Oracle, IBM and other leading software vendors.

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