

Pharmaceutical distributor teams up with IBM for JD Edwards application management services

Challenge: Seamlessly integrate the JD Edwards OneWorld application into a rapid growth environment filled with complex custom configurations and provide for its ongoing support.

Solution: Team up with IBM to provide Application Management Services (AMS) and stabilize system performance, improve service levels, and enable the application to support sustained growth.

Benefit: Thanks to its relationship with IBM, Procurity has achieved a stable application environment and enjoyed a significant knowledge transfer that has measurably boosted the company's technological capabilities.

One of the realities of the business world is the fact that companies often face their greatest challenges not when they are contracting but during times of significant expansion. For Procurity Pharmacy Services Inc., this reality started to hit home in 2002. Thanks to a solid business strategy and the growth of its e-commerce solutions, Procurity - a primary supply source for over 50,000 pharmaceuticals, products, medications and other consumer items to pharmacy customers across Western Canada - was growing faster than anticipated. Its growth was so rapid, in fact, that it was quickly outgrowing its legacy Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

To improve customer service, order accuracy, and the timeliness of its shipments, Procurity knew it would have to adopt a new ERP system. Its challenge, however, was to engage a technology partner with sufficient experience to assist with the implementation and support of its selected application in real time.

No time for mistakes

In selecting JD Edwards (JDE) OneWorld, Procurity relied on an evaluation conducted by a similar company, which it had prepared following its own JDE implementation. According to the evaluation, the JDE solution had the functionality Procurity needed to improve its order taking, reduce operational costs, and avoid costly shipping errors. To streamline implementation, however, the other company also recommended retaining an experienced integration partner.

Following this recommendation, Procurity issued a Request For Proposal seeking an implementation provider with a local presence, strong industry expertise, and proven experience implementing JDE solutions. After a formal evaluation, Procurity selected IBM.

In relatively short order, IBM helped Procurity roll out a robust Finance and Materials Management system. In addition to enabling the company to extend its services to its customers, the solution allowed Procurity to expand its e-commerce initiative while supporting future volume expansion.

Yet, despite the success of the implementation, there was one issue Procurity still had to address: ongoing support.

Maintaining application maturity

Following its rollout of JDE, Procurity attempted to support the application internally. However, given its rapid growth environment, the company needed its core staff members to assist with operations rather than working on support functions. As it began to transition core implementation staff away from support, Procurity's remaining IT personnel began to experience challenges. User issues were mounting, and the company lacked the internal resources to respond in a timely manner.

So once again, the company turned to its trusted partner. "Following our implementation of JDE OneWorld, it became clear that we needed the expertise of an application support partner," explains Rheal Lesage, Director of Information Systems and e-Commerce at Procurity. "We realized fairly quickly that we lacked the internal expertise to support the systems which, quite frankly, were running on some odd configurations. IBM already had extensive knowledge of our systems, and we were happy with their performance during implementation, so we turned directly to IBM for help."

In mid-2003, IBM and Procurity entered into a three-year contract. In addition to providing application management and support, IBM worked to streamline Procurity's complex system configurations and provide support for the wide range of custom configurations upon which Procurity relies.

Enabling a transfer of knowledge

"Before JD Edwards, we used to go directly to the developers of our application software for the support of our legacy system, and we would quite often wait a very long time for results," Lesage explains. "However, following the implementation of JDE and the enlistment of IBM, the response time we got was so quick that we began to rely on the IBM AMS team almost too heavily. As a result, in addition to turning to IBM for standard support functions, we were also looking to the team to fix our day-to-day issues rather than asking them to show us how to fix them ourselves."

Recognizing the importance of facilitating a knowledge transfer, however, Procurity soon began working alongside the IBM AMS team to learn how to support the day-to-day issues common to running its applications. By the time its three-year support contract ended, Procurity was in a position to significantly reduce the number of hours of support it required each month when it renewed its support contract for another three-year term.

The power of partnership

Today, Procurity continues to trust IBM to maintain its application environment and ensure ongoing system stability. One dedicated IBM AMS consultant continues to work with the company to resolve its challenges and meet evolving user needs. And Procurity couldn't be happier.

"I don't think we have a better relationship with any other business partner," Lesage admits. "IBM has been part of everything we have done here in these last few years. During that time, we replaced all our hardware with IBM systems. We consolidated all our software with IBM Business Partner software solutions. We have relied so much on IBM in the last few years that we don't have the need to turn anywhere else. Anything we're looking for, IBM can provide us."

For more information

To learn more about IBM Application Management Services, contact your local IBM sales representative or visit our Web site at www.can.ibm.com/services.



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