

CASE STUDY

Alpha Security

Canton, OH

Moving iSeries Shops to the Web with ProData Software!

Alpha Security finds web solution with RSP!

Objective: iSeries shops all over are moving their business to the web. Or at least they want to. And quickly! So fast that there is little time to get programmers up to speed in this new and unfamiliar territory. One such company was Alpha Security in Canton Ohio. Their goal was to utilize current skills in-house to aggressively pursue a web-based ordering system for Alpha's largest customers. The web site would require tight integration into the ordering, inventory control, and financial systems.

Solution: Since 1984, Alpha Security has provided security products for open merchandising. These products include anti-sweep hooks, locking hooks and swivel tags, like those you would see on Nintendo games in big retail stores like Wal-Mart, Best Buy and Circuit City. Alpha Security products assist in the preparation of getting products like this on the shelf and into the customer's hands ... without loss.

Alpha Security's IT Department was made up of 2 full and 3 part-time employees. The staff supported 75 users in North America, marketing and distribution services in Europe, and vendor applications in Asia. The skill set was centered entirely on the AS/400 and green screen applications with no web development skills.

Jeff Smith, IT Manager was assigned the task web-enabling Alpha's back-end systems.

Smith commented, "I knew it would take us months to develop our internal staff to enable them to develop a robust web-based ordering system. I struggled with how to take a group of good AS/400 programmers and quickly turn them into web experts. I knew it would take much more time than Senior Management would allow us."

Smith reviewed many "off the shelf" systems. "I personally reviewed over 10 pre-packaged store front systems. The systems were easy to use and set up, but offered minimal functionality. It seemed integration into Alpha's back-end systems was going to be difficult at best," remarked Smith. "Additionally, I reviewed technology such as HATS and "screen-scraping" software. Again, the investigation left me with many doubts that we could provide an aesthetically acceptable and highly functional web site."

“Finally, I had read about RSP in an AS/400 publication,” Smith continued, “the advertisement promised the ability to leverage the investment that Alpha had in RPG and green screen knowledge.” Smith made a call to ProData to inquire about the RSP software and followed it with downloading a 30 day trial of the software.

After 4 hours with the RSP product, Smith says he was ‘blown away’. “I had taken an ‘HTML for Dummies’ tutorial,” said Smith, “and with the small amount of HTML I had learned and the RSP product, I was able to develop some simple web pages. You CAN teach an old dog new tricks!”

Shortly thereafter, Alpha Security arranged to have Schadd Gray spend a few days with them at their Ohio facility. In 3 days, Gray had taught Alpha’s internal resources how to develop a robust online ordering system. Within several weeks, the staff developed a site that they were proud to show to their management team.

“It was fantastic!” Smith remarked. “If you are like me and have years of AS/400 experience but have been reluctant to take on the web world, take a good look at RSP. With a short amount of HTML training and some RSP help, you can make the transition. The folks at ProData that support RSP have been terrific in helping Alpha make the leap in technology. Timely responses to questions, excellent telephone support, and a solid product make RSP a great choice.”