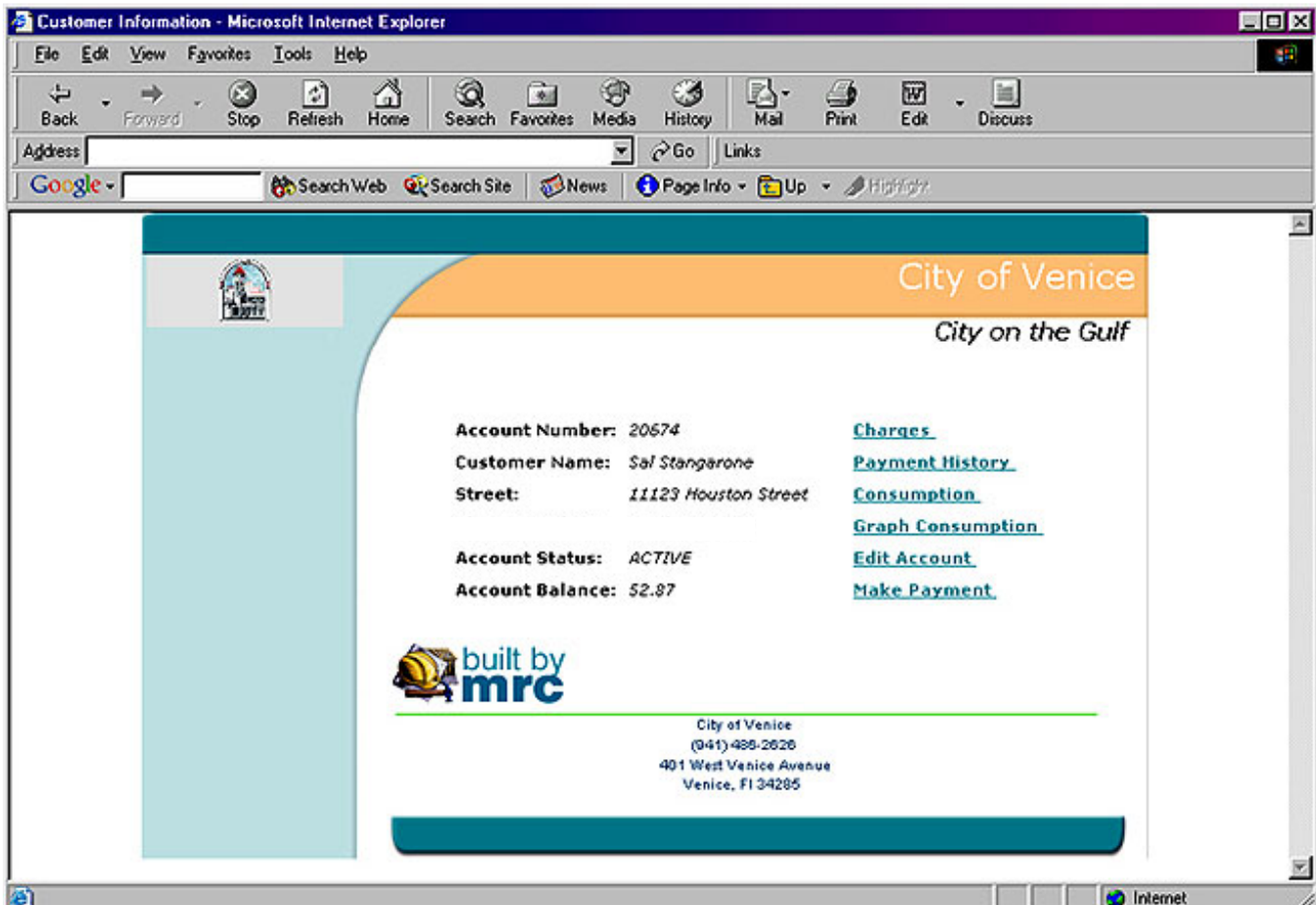




Productivity Profile

Venice establishes government efficiency through Java servlets



When Steve Randall, at the City of Venice, Florida, chose to upgrade to the latest version of the mrc-Productivity Series, he opened the door to Web capabilities that hadn't been there before, including Java servlet applications— even though Steve's never had a day of Java training.

Recap

A customer since 1989, Steve Randall, Director of Information Systems at the City government of Venice, FL,

discovered the mrc-Productivity Series while in search of a way to quickly create custom reports. He'd been given an imminent, and seemingly impossible, state deadline to file a mandatory custom report. He also was in need of a report to track the number of water meters in the community along with water consumption calculated on a quarterly basis, instead of on a monthly basis as City of Venice's municipal software package measured it.

This municipal system is a widely used iSeries government software package, which performs a variety of functions designed primarily for city and county governments. It is a good solution as far as packaged software goes, but packaged software falls short in that it simply can't foresee and accommodate every need. Customized reports are commonly needed to subsidize the packaged reports, and, in this case the two reports he needed required heavy-duty and specific customizing.

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Randall researched consultants to customize the quarterly readings report, and the special report for the state, and he was quoted \$5,000 and \$2,500 respectively for the reports. Disappointed, he went in search of a more economical solution.

In researching software companies, consultants, and tool options, he discovered the mrc-Productivity Series. With

New challenges solved

Recently, Randall re-examined his needs and chose to upgrade to the latest version of the mrc-Productivity Series which also features such Web capabilities as CGI, XML, and Java servlets. Since the decision to upgrade, the city of Venice has built several Java servlet applications, "We run several extranet-based inquiry applications on our site, for example, business licenses,

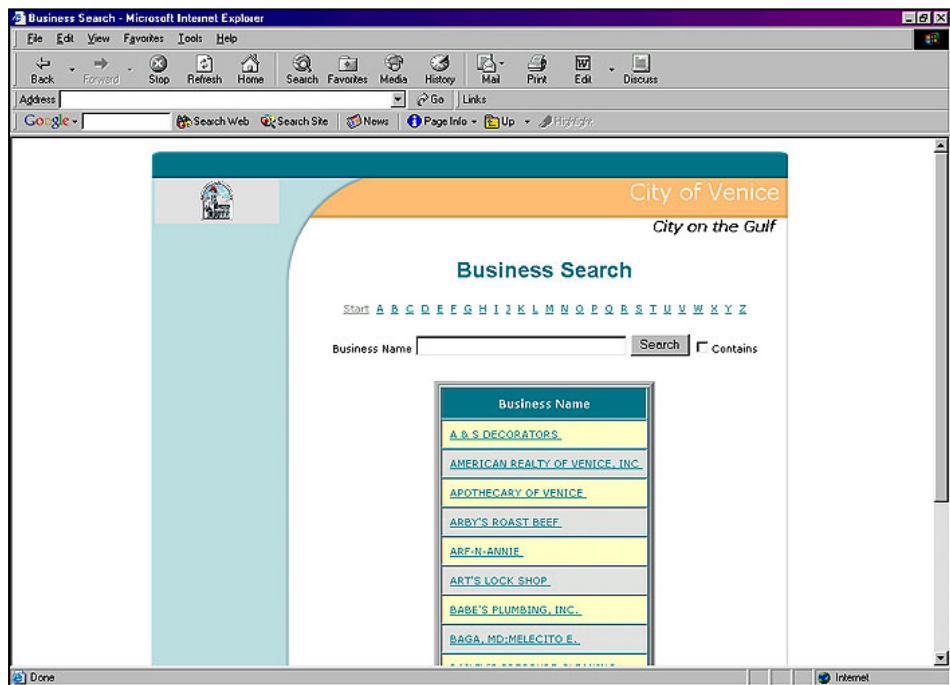
"Right now we're in the process of looking for companies that will process credit card payments for us so we can add that capability to each of these applications. However, there's apparently a state ordinance that states that we can't charge one person more for water than someone else. If we include a surcharge for credit card processing in the water bill application, that would actually be breaking this ordinance.

However, I believe that if we add the credit card processing as an entirely separate outside fee, then it is fine. We're still trying to figure it out – it's a minor setback."

In addition to the series of inquiries and reports he built, Randall also began a project for the local Fire and Safety department: a network of digital image files. The fire department has a separate set of personnel files...records that don't actually get filed with an individual's day-to-day personnel files.

For example, firefighters have to take a number of qualification and certification tests in order to be an active firefighter.

There's a driver operating test, hydraulics test, hydrants, and equipment usage test, standards/training verification, alarms, etc. Also, certification requires classroom training and a test, and the results need to be available and linked to their files...but the tests add up to huge paper files. Steve Randall built the front end of the application, including name, date of certification, subject, course, grade, and with just a click, an image of the individual's actual test appears,



this software tool suite, he could not only create both of these reports very quickly by himself, and pay for the software in saved consulting fees, but he would also own the solution and have the ability to create such custom reports any time the need presented itself.

He purchased the tool suite on a Friday. By the following Monday, the City of Venice's mrc-generated report was filed with the state.

utility billing, and lookups for building permits," said Randall, Director of IS, City of Venice.

"Our ultimate goal is to offer a fully-functional one-stop-shop to users in each of these applications, so that if they wanted to pay for a building permit online with a credit card, they could do so." However, one factor that slowed down this process doesn't seem to escape any size government, and that's bureaucratic red tape.

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and can be zoomed into for more detail.

In another application, code enforcement became a priority. "Let's say you have an unlicensed vehicle in your driveway. The city will write a letter of notification, the will be inspected and digitally photographed as evidence, and the information is then filed in the city's database. This new application will access the pictures, the letter, the violator's name or address, and a user can go online and search by the address they are looking for."

The value

Going to the Web doesn't just mean application modernization, or less filing to do. It can mean huge savings when employee time, new revenue opportunities, paper/printing, and recovered business converge.

Employee time spent on account maintenance is greatly reduced by allowing users to access and maintain their accounts online with a password, and reduced again in processed paperwork.

The city also gains added value as Randall explains, "The easier we make it for builders to file building permits on line, the more likely developers will decide to bid in our area, which is good for growth, and good for the City of Venice's economy. Builders aren't going to go out of their way to build here if the town over from us is more accommodating. Same with business permits. The easier we make it for businesses to grow, the better off we'll all be."

Additionally, Steve found areas where revenue had

slipped through the cracks, and he wanted to make sure they caught it. "With one of our reports that is tied into our business licenses, there is a way to compare business licenses filed with the state and business licenses filed in Venice, FL, to make sure that if a flower shop owner bought her license in the state of Florida to set up shop in the city of Venice, but Venice was never paid for a license, that revenue can now be recovered.

"Each situation is different, but in my case, I couldn't see a good enough reason to go out and spend thousands of dollars on just one custom application. Now, because I had the good sense to purchase the mrc-Productivity Series, I have the resources to build whatever I need. To me it makes sense to do it this way," explains Randall. "It was worth every penny."

"And, it's just so easy to use. People are blown away when I tell them it only took me two days to create the business licenses application as a Java servlet when I'd had no prior Java training. What they don't understand is that the application itself only took me 20 minutes to build...it was assembling everything else that took the most time."

"Another reason that I prefer to use the mrc-Productivity Series is the quality of the product. I've worked with code generators before, and they are all the same – the applications are buggy, and they produce error messages that require me to go into to the code and try to figure out what the generator has added/removed incorrectly. I've never once had to do that with the mrc-Productivity

Series. I always get a clean compile. Not only that, but most programmers, in general, aren't a huge fan of documentation. But, with the mrc-Productivity Series it's all right there in the source code, so it's easy to find, should you ever actually need it."

The future

Looking forward, Randall can see making additional improvements. One area might be parking...

Right now parking violations are filed as a miscellaneous line item in our city income, and the payments arrive in pre-printed envelopes that City of Venice prints and attaches to the ticket.

Explains, Randall, "Once we begin to accept credit cards on other parts of the site, that's another area we could definitely look into. The mrc-Productivity Series makes it all possible."

michaels, ross & cole ltd.
1920 S. Highland Avenue.,



Suite 203
Lombard, IL 60148
630.916.0662
mrc@mrc-productivity.com
www.mrc-productivity.com