

Fireman's Fund Reports a Recovery



On the afternoon of September 7th, 2001, Steve Penn, Applications Manager at Fireman's Fund McGee Marine Underwriters had just finished up the Web site he'd been developing with the mrc-Productivity Series. Before leaving that night, he uploaded it onto the company's Web server making one of his division's daily reports accessible to local users. When he packed up for the weekend, and left his offices in Tower 2 of the World Trade Center he couldn't have known what the following Tuesday, 9/11, would bring.

Founded in 1863 in San Francisco, Fireman's Fund Insurance Company has survived some of the most infamous American disasters in this country's history. Within eight years of its beginnings, it met the massive obligations arising from the Great Chicago Fire, and within fifty years, it just barely hung on to make it through the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 when few other insurance companies financially

survived. However, on September 11th, the company was affected more personally than ever before when its offices in the World Trade Center were destroyed.

"We had people begin to come back into the office September 24, after we'd managed to find some space in New Jersey. All of our communications in New York had obviously been destroyed, all of our printed files, everything. But, even with all of that, we managed to get the Web up on our end that day, and because our Web server is located in Arizona, the application that I had created on the previous week was actually unchanged."

Because the daily reports had been built with the mrc-Productivity Series, it was easy to make them available to all of the field offices country wide via the Web site. "It was just a matter of choosing to output the reports for Web use instead of for printing. Simple as that."

Earlier in the summer, Fireman's Fund McGee Marine had begun examining their system of reporting. The distribution of multiple daily reports was starting to seem outmoded, cumbersome, and costly. Steve Penn, Fireman's Fund McGee Marine Applications Manager, knew there had to be a better way, "We had a number of daily reports that needed to get to branches all over the country...

This meant printing the reports, breaking them down by user within branch, then and faxing them to each of the separate branches. Often, too, these reports had to be broken down by hand at the other end in order to extract the necessary information. This process was translating into very high soft costs."

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Penn continued, "In the world of insurance, especially, live data is extremely important. Claims management, claims processing, and financial analysts can't wait weeks on end for vital data to come through and expect to remain competitive. They need that information now."

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“Fireman’s Fund wanted to find a way of automatically distributing these reports, and gaining faster access to live data. Web-enabling the applications seemed to be their best option, and the mrc-Productivity Series Web capabilities seemed to fit perfectly with their needs,” said David Starosta, mrc Account Executive.

The attributes of the Internet, and its Web sisters, extranet and intranet, have been touted as a prominent means by which business may be done more efficiently. However, no one could have predicted in this particular case, how helpful the application of such technologies would actually be.

“There were a few maintenance reports that had to be changed to get them to come back up on the Web site, but we got them up, tested them, and with the mrc-Productivity Series I was able to make those necessary changes within a matter of hours.”

Over the next few months, Steve Penn and his development team were able to provide additional services to the company’s branches by developing a number of retrievals for internal business concerns. In the process of creating these separate retrievals, they broke down reports at each branch, surveying each on their three or four most common needs.

“The system is entirely Web-based now. Date-sensitive, previous weeks as far back as the current system goes, transaction date, accounting period, depending on their need and based on previous report— it makes a dramatic difference in some areas. For instance, where most reports were monthly, they are now able to get up to the minute data.”

Penn continued, “mrc has really been invaluable the last few months. It’s pretty amazing, after everything that happened, that we were able to get anything working at that point, and then to do it so quickly. It really felt like more than a small victory.”

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