Case Study

twincentric

Flexibility and ease-of-use deliver low-cost open solutions to Port of Felixstowe

The Port of Felixstowe is the largest container port in the UK, the 4th largest in Europe, and the 13th largest in the world. Services from Felixstowe connect the UK with over 360 ports in over 100 countries worldwide. It is owned by Hutchison Ports (UK) Limited and is one of the 29 ports in the Hutchison Port Holdings (HPH) network, which handled over 25 million TEU (Twenty Foot Equivalent unit) in 2000. HPH is a subsidiary of Hutchison Whampoa Ltd. (HWL), based in Hong Kong.

In 1984, the Port of Felixstowe was the first sea-port in the UK to introduce a computerized customs clearance system. New methods of opening up the data residing on the company's legacy system are constantly being re-examined along with an inherent need to be able to upload and download large amounts of mission-critical data such as manifest details or bills of lading. The port has promoted the use of Internet technology since the early 1990's to maximize the efficiency of its cargo handling operations.

IT leadership extends information to all sectors of port community

The catalyst for Port of Felixstowe's daily operations is The Felixstowe Cargo Processing System (FCPS) which was developed to deliver uniformity of information between all port sectors, including: Shipping Lines/Agents, Port Authorities, Terminal Operators, Customs and other Government Agencies, Clearing Agents/Customs Brokers and road and rail hauliers/operators.

Integral to the system is the tracking facility, designed to update data containing up-to-the-minute information about imports, exports, transhipments, dangerous/hazardous goods and maritime statistics reporting. It is used in several other UK ports besides Felixstowe including: Thamesport, Teesport, Grangemouth, London and Liverpool and is operated by port community specialists, Maritime Cargo Processing plc., (MCP) Ltd.

The tracking system itself uses a web interface designed by twincentric as the front-end

and is extremely easy-to-use. Users can look and immediately access the status of containers, using container numbers, bills of lading or reference number ids. *"The immediate accessibility of up-to-the-minute information, translates into better service levels for our customers,"* said Russell Knowles, Technical Development Manager, Felixstowe Dock & Railway Co.,(Port of Felixstowe), Hutchison Ports (UK) Ltd., *"Customs clearance is faster, fewer phone calls need to be made and there are fewer routine administrative tasks for each participant in the port sector."*

Open Systems minimizes obsolescence and saves costs

The Core FCPS was held on one of four legacy systems, but due to their imminent obsolescence and the desire to make data more accessible to more people, Felixstowe spearheaded the initiative to move to open systems utilizing solutions from twincentric. *"Data becomes more available in the 'open world' and due to the complete inaccessibility of the mainframes – from a simple client interface like Excel to a full-blown development tool like Visual Studio – we had to open up the legacy systems. Not only that, open systems are a lot less expensive, and we saved approximately 25% by going with twincentric's Net.visual."*

Migration of data to multiple environments requires flexibility

"It was the flexibility, in terms of both the range of the Net.Visual product suite and twincentric's development team which swung the decision in their favour," stated Knowles. "We put out a tender but we soon realized

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Russell Knowles, Technical Development Manager, Felixstowe Dock & Railway Co

that we wanted to work with twincentric because of its flexibility."

it was the *range of uses* which really impressed Knowles. "We are using the product suite in a number of different ways," he explained. Besides the FCPS tracking system, messaging/store and forward standards were developed in order to migrate the data to a number of different environments: whether to the mainframe via, standard emulation packages, or via, UNIX or IBM gateways, or to develop client/server applications or web interfaces. According to Knowles, Net.Visual also potentially has a place as an evolutionary migration tool using the pooling component. "It's so flexible, we've just found another potential use for it," he said.

Know where you're going, or work with a company who can help get you there

Knowles was not only impressed by the breadth of uses for the Net.Visual solution but also the flexibility, skills and speed of the development team. "twincentric really worked with us well. There are so many ways to open up the mainframe to multiple users and multiple computing environments they really helped us to get the most out of our environment. They then provided training on their applications which we were able to trickle down to our development teams in less than one day."

"We are constantly looking for new and better ways to get more data out to more users – several hundred this year - and completely open up legacy data," explained Knowles. "But you have to know why you're doing it and where you're going with it, and twincentric can definitely help you with that."

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