

Ivan Smith Furniture

Furniture Retailer Speeds Data Access and Cuts Costs with a Java™-Based Reporting Solution from MCM Software Solutions

Customer Success Story

Industry

- Retail Trade

Business Issues

- Reduce the time required to run reports
- Simplify the creation of report templates
- Provide for browser-based access to reporting tools
- Increase employee productivity
- Boost security
- Minimize costs

Solution

Ivan Smith Furniture deployed a business-analytics solution from MCM Software Solutions that uses Sun™ technologies to generate real-time reports by interoperating with an existing ERP system. Unlike competitive offerings that require six months to deploy and a price tag averaging \$100,000, the new solution cost was significantly lower—including deployment and training fees—and was in production in just five days.

Business Results

- Provided for a complete return on investment in less than two months
- Cut yearly licensing costs by more than \$127,000 per year
- Reduced time required to run reports from minutes to seconds
- Accelerated the creation of report templates from days to less than one hour
- Eliminated more than 30–45 minutes of work from each store per day
- Increased insight into business information

Products/Services/Solutions

- Java Platform, Enterprise Edition (Java EE)
- MySQL
- Solaris Operating System
- SunSpectrum Support
- Sun Fire X4500 Server

URL Reference

sun.com/customers

Success at a glance

To maintain a competitive edge, retailers like Ivan Smith Furniture need an easy-to-use reporting tool that can rapidly extract the information employees need to streamline operations. Ivan Smith Furniture's ERP solution - built with the Escalate Retail System, Oracle database software, Sun servers, and the Solaris™ Operating System — collected information effectively. However, the company's reporting tool, SQL*Reports, ran on character-based, "green screen" terminals. Not only was the application difficult to use, but it was also slow and expensive. To create a report, an employee had to spend time filling out parameter screens. These reports could take several minutes to run, depending on the total number of reports waiting to be processed. Another trouble area was that new SQL*Reports, or even enhancements, often took a week or more in the programming and testing phase because only one employee, the lone SQL programmer, had the necessary skill set. Security was also a concern because SQL*Reports did not integrate with the company's new intranet security and data control system.

Ivan Smith Furniture wanted to replace SQL*Reports with a Web-based tool that was easy to use, affordable, and secure. After evaluating popular business-analytics software, the company found that leading solutions, like Cognos and SAP, were complex and costly and did not compare to JEvolution from MCM Software Solutions for total value. "We needed a great solution and we needed it yesterday! JEvolution knocked our socks off," says Christa Williams, network administrator at Ivan Smith Furniture. "It is easy to understand, has amazing support services, and is, quite frankly, a bargain." While other tools cost about \$100,000

(without implementation and training fees) and can take up to six months to deploy, JEvolution costs significantly less and can be deployed in one week. The solution's underlying technologies also factored into the company's choice. Developed with Java Platform, Enterprise Edition (Java EE), JEvolution is extremely flexible and offers numerous component options.

Ivan Smith Furniture selected a software configuration that includes the Solaris OS, MySQL™ database software, and the Apache Tomcat Web server. Both Apache Tomcat and MySQL are open-source software packages that deliver industry-proven performance and affordability. In addition, MySQL—which stores all reporting procedures - offers a variety of enterprise support subscription options from Sun and can easily interoperate with the company's ERP database, as well as other systems including Microsoft SQL Server. Ivan Smith Furniture opted to deploy the solution on two existing Sun servers: a Sun Fire™ V250 and Sun Enterprise 4500, protected by SunSpectrum™ Gold Support. "Our Sun servers still support our needs as well today as when we first deployed them seven years ago," notes Williams. "With Sun, I know I can count on great support. On a recent support call I was put through to the engineer right away, and he solved my problem very quickly. He also gave me his direct line to call if I had any additional questions. That is 5-star service in anyone's book."

In September 2008, Mauricio Castro, founder of MCM Software Solutions, personally deployed the reporting system in just two days, making sure that it worked with the company's data security guidelines. "Keeping our security structure intact was very important to us, and we accomplished that," says Michelle Chadwick, System Operations

Specialist at Ivan Smith Furniture. "We also implemented very detailed controls over our data, specifying who can access sensitive information and for which store locations," adds Williams. Castro then spent three days training the IT staff how to use the application, and by the end of the week they could create JEvolution reports. "MCM Software bent over backwards and really got involved in our world to help us," Williams adds. "I've never seen anything like it. We wouldn't get that level of support from any other software company."

As a result of its new solution, Ivan Smith Furniture can reduce recurring licensing costs. The ERP costs, which include the required database and application license and support fees, per terminal per year, are \$2,650 for each and every terminal. "With JEvolution, we don't have to pay separate license/support fees per terminal; plus an unlimited numbers of end users can run JEvolution reports" says Williams. "I can take a \$399 computer, drop it down anywhere in our retail environment and users can run these powerful reports with a few clicks." The combination of Web-based access and roles-based security policies allow employees to run reports from their workstations in seconds, whenever they need them. Now each store can save 30–45 minutes of work per day - boosting productivity and morale. "I've had calls from managers who say 'I love it!'", explains Chadwick. "When that happens, you know the solution is good for the company."

"Just by downsizing one terminal per store, our company could save \$127,000 per year; and these are not just one-time savings; we will save a lot every year. This means JEvolution can pay for itself many times over in the first year," notes Williams. "Plus, we've gained numerous time-saving benefits. A remarkable JEvolution Report benefit is that our IT department staff members that are not programmers can create new JEvolution report templates in about an hour."

A perfect example of what JEvolution has done for the company is described by Chadwick: "Previously, the buying department typed up price change notices, which were then sent out by email to all the stores many times per day, whether they stocked the merchandise or not. Employees at the store had to continually monitor email and check their inventory which was very time consuming" says Chadwick. "With an idea from a store manager and the new JEvolution software, a report was created that allows each store's manager to view every price change for that store's inventory only, thereby eliminating the need for that constant stream of emails."

Over the next year Ivan Smith Furniture plans to extend JEvolution to deliver reports to executives' mobile devices. The company will also work with MCM Software Solutions to develop a sophisticated price tag system using JEvolution and Sun technologies.

"Given today's economy, it is imperative that your operations are running efficiently. A tool like JEvolution from MCM Software Solutions—that is very low in cost and runs on a reliable platform from Sun—allows you to analyze your business so you can effectively combine and automate manual operations. As a result, you can save time and spend less. By keeping operating expenses down the company, the employees, and most importantly the customer will benefit from the savings."

Michelle Chadwick

System Operations Specialist, Ivan Smith Furniture