

Migration Transformation Modernization

Speed > Safety > Success



Altech Software—System i to .NET Framework

New markets gained—and costs saved—by modernizing food industry solution.

Quick Take

PROBLEM

The System i interface limited Altech's ability to attract new customers and operate in new markets.

SOLUTION

With the help of Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner ASNA, Altech migrated its solution code from System i to the Microsoft .NET Framework.

RESULTS

- New distribution channels
- Increased sales
- Migration savings of 75%

Customer

Altech Software Limited of Hawthorn, England provides integrated software applications to food manufacturers with turnover of over £5 million.

Challenge

Altech originally developed its software for the IBM System i application market. Target users familiar mainly with Microsoft Office tools are unlikely to adopt a System i application, so Altech realized a new interface was needed.

"Our end-user target customers have little or no experience with the System i user interface," Altech Commercial Director Alan Blyther says. "Conversion to AVR.NET was essential to market our solution."

"The legacy look and feel was a barrier to the market; users would not adopt the System i interface."

Alan Blyther, Commercial Director

Altech's goal was to take several hundred thousand lines of legacy code and create an interface acceptable to new business customers while integrating end solution modules in customers' required core functions.

Altech also wanted to add a revenue channel offering migration services to other IBM legacy application users, enabling adaptation of the Microsoft interface with the option of moving to an SQL Server platform.

"It is probable System i applications will become obsolete; they are already becoming more difficult to support and develop, and fewer professionals have the requisite skills."

Alan Blyther, Commercial Director

The company investigated simple migration, rewriting or replacing the existing platform. Wholesale replacement and rewriting, however, were more risky, costly, and time consuming.

Speed to market and price were compelling factors in seeking a solution, and estimates on both were high. Average estimates on migrations were plugged as taking a year or longer and costs were significant.

These solutions did not fully meet Altech's needs, as the company required a system compatible with users' capabilities and needs in order to add revenue channels, offer services and financially benefit the company in a fast-growing market—factors that time-consuming, costly rewrites, or platform replacements would impede.

ASNA Solution

ASNA offered a series of software tools and solutions for migrating Altech from an existing System i application to an AVR.NET framework. Solutions were also put into place for porting to a Microsoft SQL Server database in order to provide Altech with a complete working solution.

Using ASNA's Monarch modernization tool, Altech developed a roadmap for migrating a range of applications from early to late stage solution during the migration process.

The solution was to implement a VisionNPD application running as a Web application under IIS on the Microsoft server platform accessing either the DB2/400 or MS SQL Server. The goal was for the application to support unlimited users.

The migration process was completed in four months. "This shaved eight months off our time-to-market for the launch of the 'Vision For Food' solution in the UK and therefore our time-to-revenue," Blyther reports.

"Our alternative strategy would have been to rewrite the application," Blyther adds—a timeframe estimated at 12 months. Cost, timescale, and potential to leverage a solution and develop a revenue opportunity were critical influencers in the ASNA migration solution.

"We achieved the migration at less than a quarter of the price, in a third of the time. This shaved eight months of our time-to-market for the launch of the 'Vision For Food' solution in the UK, and therefore our time-to-revenue."

Alan Blyther, Commercial Director

Project Benefits

By migrating its solution to the AVR.NET framework, Altech expects to exponentially increase sales percentages, offer a more profitable business model to users, open up new markets, and venture into more

profitable business models such as "software as a service." In addition, by using ASNA tools, the migration time and cost were significantly reduced.

Migration Savings of 75 Percent: The migration was both fast—taking only four months—and cost effective. Altech saved 75 percent of what it would have spent for an evaluation and core migration using an alternative approach.

Moreover, by using an interface application, Altech took advantage of its legacy code application in the AVR.NET framework environment rather than rewriting code from scratch. This extended the company's return on its investment in that code and avoided an additional investment to debug and perfect new code. This process also enabled Altech to retain control of the migration project in-house.

Cost, timescale, and potential to leverage a solution and develop a revenue opportunity were critical influencers in choosing the ASNA migration solution.

Increased Revenues: Since implementing the ASNA solution, Blyther reports significant increases in sales percentages. With the capability of supporting SQL Server, additional "Vision For Food" SQL Server modules and enhancements currently in development in the AVR.NET environment and other Visual Studio environments for electronic interfacing with external users, revenue will continue to grow.

The move is enabling Altech to focus on more lucrative software distribution channels within the UK while following a vision of customer integration with modules offering end solutions to food companies in core functions required by food technical and development departments.

"The critical indicators of successful migration," Blyther concludes, "have been that it works, that it is a true Web application, that it supports either DB2 or SQL Server, and that it was delivered on budget and within our launch timeline."