

Midrange Dynamics Tools Drive ERP Transformation at Food Service Manufacturer



FROM LEGACY ERP TO A CUSTOM-BUILT MODERN SYSTEM

It's a massive undertaking for a company to go from using a third-party ERP application package, built on RPG, to creating their own fully customized ERP applications using modern programming methods. This was the multi-year project that the programming team recently accomplished at Hatco, a leading manufacturer of equipment for the food service industry. For over 20 years, Hatco ran its ERP operations on a highly customized version of BPCS software. However, the need for more control over application functions as well as the need to attract younger programmers, drove this major initiative.

"Today we run six different companies off our custom ERP system," says Ted Macksam, vice president of IT at Hatco.

"We're excited about what we've been able to create over the past several years using open source tools and modern programming methods like SQL. It's been an essential step not only as our business grows, but as we tackle the persistent challenge of finding and keeping younger programmers whose skills are centered on modern programming languages."



FINDING THE RIGHT IBM i DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

To support this effort, Ted and his team required an array of dependable software-development tools. They found not all their current tools were able to deliver the functionality needed. "A few years ago, we came to a point with another IBM i change management vendor where their tools just weren't able to handle some of our critical needs," says Ted.

"As we evaluated the various offerings on the market it quickly became clear that Midrange Dynamics North America not only supplied tools with the functions we required, but were able to provide an exceptional level of support and responsiveness."



MDCMS AND MDOPEN ACCELERATE THE MOVE TO FREE-FORM RPG

Today, Ted and his team use a variety of products from MDNA, including MDCMS, MDOpen, and MDRapid.

"Although we still have some RPG applications, our long-term project is to be a free-form RPG shop," says Ted. "MDCMS and MDOpen have been indispensable in helping our younger programmers who are not familiar with the RPG style of coding get their work done efficiently. And it's very easy to train new programmers on MDCMS and MDOpen. We're able to get people up to speed and productive in less than a day."



VS CODE INTEGRATION DELIVERS SPEED AND SIMPLICITY

As Ted and his team continue to look for and utilize new programming methods and platforms, MDOpen is always able to assist their efforts.

“We’re just starting to use VS Code as our development platform within MDOpen and so far it looks very intuitive and easy,” says Ted. “I’m particularly impressed with how responsive VS Code is within MDOpen. It’s significantly more responsive than RDi within MDOpen, because RDi just takes up so much memory. We’re really excited about our path forward with VS Code.”



SMART ARCHIVING PROTECTS INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE

During their software modernization process, and to speed up recompile times, Ted and his team have made a big effort to go through and retire old code. Among many of the features he appreciates with MDCMS is its archiving capability.

“I like that MDCMS doesn’t really delete the code that we no longer need, but archives it,” says Ted. “If we need to refer to old code, we can easily get it back from the archive. Because of this, my team can be more aggressive about getting rid of code that we don’t think we’ll need. As our older programmers have retired, we’ve lost some institutional knowledge, so this feature is particularly useful. It gets this code out of our environments so it doesn’t undergo recompiles and yet, if needed, we can always go back and look at the code in the archive.”



MDRAPID TURNS COMPLEX PROMOTIONS INTO A NON-EVENT

“One of the biggest game-changers resulting from our move to MDNA has been MDRapid,” says Ted. “It allows us to stage our production promotions live during the day, so that the data is synched. Then, because we need to get exclusive object locks to finalize the promotion, with MDRapid we can do this at a time when it’s more convenient to the business. From there it only takes minutes to move it all over.”

“Promotions with our previous vendor’s tools were always a big deal,” Ted continues. “We had to really plan them in advance, but with MDRapid, promotions are a nonevent.”



EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT MAKES MDNA A TOP-RATED VENDOR

Great software development tools aren’t the only thing that has impressed Ted about MDNA. The knowledge and responsiveness of the support team made them one of his favorite software vendors. “I’m very busy and I’m constantly juggling a lot of priorities so it’s critical to me how the vendor reacts to answering questions or solving problems when they arise,” concludes Ted.

“Not only do the products just work, the MDNA support team is very responsive and knowledgeable when I need them. Because the products work so well, I rarely need to ask. That’s really important to me when I rate my vendors, and Midrange Dynamics North America is at the top. It’s been a great partnership.”
