

Bytes Systems Integration paves the way for future IT developments at Pam Golding Properties

After 32 years in the property market Pam Golding Properties (PGP) has become a trusted household name when it comes to real estate. However, to gain a lead in a market that has suffered a slump recently, PGP turned to technology to get its systems running properly, better serve its customers and to create an efficient working environment for its staff.

“We were struggling with our online systems because they were not integrating efficiently. We needed to link our web services with our database and various applications but soon realised our systems were very disjointed and were linked by an array of applications that just didn’t make sense,” says Henry Potgieter, infrastructure manager for Pam Golding Properties.

Bytes Systems Integration (SI) was chosen to make sense of the various applications and document the existing applications to allow all the systems to integrate seamlessly. The project which started in March 2008 was successfully completed five months later and achieved the integration and logical links between the database and the various applications and web services that PGP needed.

Business and Technology Goals

Bytes SI met the requirements of the real estate giant by building an application that logically grouped the web services and created a Services Orientated Architecture (SOA) layer that sits above the database and dynamically controls the links between the various applications and the database.

“When we started at PGP in the beginning of 2008, its application business logic resided in many systems and was tightly integrated into those systems. As a result its IT systems were difficult to use, slow and expensive to grow with the businesses needs,” says Willem Odendaal, senior architect at Bytes SI.

One of the main goals of the solution was to document how PGP’s current IT systems are built so that future systems can be easily built to this standard. The SOA layer implemented achieved this level of standard and will dictate the management principles for the future. In this way the collective teams have lead the way and implemented a solution that creates a benchmark and standard for all future applications to be built on within PGP.

The solution really paves the way forward for all future implementations as it has developed a logical and powerful foundation for future technology developments.

“We set out with a small team to start implementing the SOA architecture at Pam Golding. But as with any SOA architecture it is critical to have a successful pilot project, so for our pilot project we focused on providing services to be used by PGP internal intranet website.

“The intranet website is used daily by hundreds of PGP offices around the country. During the pilot project we followed agile development practices like SCRUM and Continuous Integration with great success,” adds Odendaal.

Solution

Albeit an uncomplicated solution the application implemented by Bytes SI satisfies the needs of PGP by providing an integration layer that effectively links the database to the various web services.

The solution itself is built on a .Net platform and makes use of web services, factories, cruise control for continuous integration and an NUnit testing application and uses SOA as the management principle.

“SOA is a long-term goal, it was important for the business and IT department to understand and support what we were doing. As such education of business and IT staff was an important part of the project.

“The pilot project is only the beginning, and we trust that it will serve as the foundation for future SOA growth at Pam Golding Properties and that will ultimately make its systems more agile, more business focused and cheaper to maintain,” says Odendaal.

Benefits

According to Potgieter, “Our IT Services have already seen marked benefits since having the SOA layer in place.”

Most notable of these benefits are:

- Reduced time to deliver on projects due to a well documented set of SOA services that address the most commonly used business requirements.
- Reduced project cost: SOA has allowed us to hide complexity, simplifying project deliverables and therefore reducing costs.
- Greater opportunity for integration. SOA now enables us to integrate solutions without having to be concerned with the underlying technology of the solutions. This allows us to be much more efficient in our delivery of solutions to the business.

Conclusion

“In our search for a partner to help us develop our SOA layer, Bytes came forward with a team in place with the right expertise and experience to help us achieve our goals.

“Not only did the company deliver on the expectation of providing the SOA system on time and in budget, but they also went beyond the technical implementation and helped us with the strategic and tactical aspects of implementing the solution. Bytes also helped us address the processes that are required to ensure the ongoing success of the solution,” says Potgieter.
