

MD Success Story



MDCMS boosts software development productivity for provincial government pension administrator

The Civil Service Superannuation Board

(CSSB) of Manitoba, Canada, depends on its own custom-built applications running on IBM i to manage the pensions of over 50,000 current and retired civil service employees.

With \$9.7 billion CAD under management in pension funds and over 20,000 retirees receiving monthly benefits, it is critical that the team of IBM i developers at the CSSB make sure the 3-million-plus lines of code in their applications precisely control data and processes across the entire organization.



For many years, the CSSB's internally developed software change management system (CMS) handled the needs of the IBM i development team, but that began to change due to the recent creation of multiple

development environments, plus the fact that the development team began to more actively use ILE, RDi, SQL, and other modern development techniques. The CSSB needed additional CMS capabilities but decided the best approach was to find and implement a commercial CMS rather than invest a great deal of time and money to update their own solution.

When Dale Allen, director of MIS, and Kent Knapp, manager of MIS, began the process of evaluating CMS vendors, they decided at the start what was needed was an agile vendor that could provide strong CMS features, be competitively priced, provide responsive support, and especially listen closely to the specific needs of the CSSB. Because of Kent's experience with other CMS packages,

he knew the ideal vendor would likely be one that has a mature offering, yet isn't too large nor too small.

Based on these criteria, only two vendors rose to the CSSB's "short list," with one of them being Midrange Dynamics. After going through in-depth demonstrations of each solution and peppering the vendors with a range of questions, it quickly became clear to Dale and Kent that MDCMS from Midrange Dynamics was the best choice.

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Kent Knapp, manager of MIS for CSSB

"The architecture of MDCMS was simply more intuitive when compared with the other solution we evaluated, not to mention the other CMS solutions I've worked with in the past," says Kent. "With MDCMS, everything just makes sense at each step of the change management process, whether it's checkout, promotion, rollbacks, exit point functionality, etc."

"MDCMS was much more logical in its design and takes a more refined approach to its functionality," adds Dale. "It was clear to us from the start this was going to be a much easier product for our development team to use."

"What really sealed the deal were the people at Midrange Dynamics," emphasizes Kent. "During our evaluation, they listened closely to our requirements and answered every one of our questions to our satisfaction."

Once the purchase was finalized, MDCMS was up and running within a month, which beat Kent's and Dale's expectations. "We were impressed how quickly we were able to begin work with MDCMS," says Dale. "I have rarely seen such a smooth implementation of a third-party software package, given the many software vendors I've worked with over the years. I credit the Midrange



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Dynamics team and the intuitive design of the solution, which made for a very short learning curve. In fact, because of its ease of use, we can get a new developer up to speed on MDCMS within one to two weeks.”

With MDCMS fully operational at the CSSB, the development team boosted its productivity in many ways:

- Prior to MDCMS, the CSSB team couldn't segregate its development environment from its testing environment if they resided in the same partition, but with MDCMS, the development, testing, and staging environments can all exist within the same partition. This not only makes the development, testing, and deployment processes more efficient, but also saves the organization money because it no longer needs to maintain multiple partitions for development processes.
- All required objects for a development project are automatically brought into the development environment by MDCMS and are kept together as each project moves from testing to production. Because of the unique way MDCMS packages together all related objects during the development cycle, the possibility of issues when software changes are brought into production is reduced. If there does happen to be any issue with missing objects prior to deploying changes to production, MDCMS alerts the developer in advance.
- The number of libraries used for software development have been consolidated, thanks to the way MDCMS organizes the development environment. Fewer libraries makes it easier for new developers to get up to speed.
- Deployments to production can be scheduled in advance. Before MDCMS, developers would often have to stay late at night or work weekends to execute deployments. With MDCMS, once the deployment occurs, the developer can see that it has completed or, if there happens to be an issue, can see detailed information about what went wrong, which makes it easy to resolve the issue and reschedule the deployment.

- An RDi plugin provided by MDCMS allows all development tasks to be done within the RDi environment, eliminating the need to use green screens.
- Built-in audit reporting in MDCMS shows any development activity that might have been done outside of standard development procedures. This helps to prevent software changes from being moved into production if those changes have been implemented outside of the organization's change request system, which is integrated with MDCMS. This has saved the CSSB's director of finance, who is responsible for approving program changes, significant time because he knows that MDCMS tracks every software change that occurs. With the previous CMS, he had to go through a cumbersome process to validate each request.

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Not only is the development team at the CSSB pleased with their productivity increase, they couldn't be happier about the support they receive from Midrange Dynamics.

“If I have a question or run into a problem, I often get an email reply from an actual person within five minutes of submitting a ticket, many times with the answer to my question” says Kent. “We never have to go through multiple levels of support. With a larger software vendor, a support ticket might not even get set up within the same day. Midrange Dynamics provides us with a level of support that we just don't see from other vendors.”

“Everyone we've worked with at Midrange Dynamics has been outstanding—from sales to trainers to support people,” adds Dale. “People across the organization understand software development processes, and the company is very open to new feature requests. On top of that, the folks at Midrange Dynamics are extremely responsive and polite. This organization is top-notch and is truly a pleasure to work with.”

Resources:

Midrange Dynamics

www.midrangedynamics.com

