



Case Study



Icreon

Web Enabled Travel Management Solution

In its effort to establish a network of travel service providers or franchisees, our client required a complete B2B and hybrid B2C Web-based business management solution. The organization teamed with Icreon for developing a complete travel management application. It had to be developed as a process-driven tool for managing customers, franchisees, online bookings, and the entire tariff structure for the client's network. Visualizing the need for complete process automation throughout the network, we designed the solution as an integrated set of modules for synchronizing operations and managing customers. While franchisees can access the application to view latest updates on their business or check for other travel service providers, customers can search for various travel destinations and book tours online. The uniqueness of this application lies in its ability to make the client's network ubiquitous and constantly updateable with real time data. The solution revolutionized the client's operations by integrating the services of reputed travel service providers within and outside India, offering higher customer satisfaction, and of course, increased revenues for the client and its network of franchisees!

Business Requirements

The client wanted to establish a community of reputed travel service providers, specializing in one or more travel services such as, package tours or airline reservations. Travel service providers include travel agents, tour operators, hotel and airline reservation providers, car rentals, and cruise organizers. The client required a Web-enabled business management system using which these service providers would be able to search for other travel service providers and offer an entire range of travel services to customers. Travel service providers would be able to customize travel packages as per specific customer requirements. The solution required to be a B2B and B2C Web-based system, which would manage the network of travel service providers and customers, displaying real time travel information and synchronizing operations throughout the network.

End-to-End Travel Management for Diverse Sets of Users

Benefits

- Reduced customer-response time
- Automatic management of commission structure and payments between the client and franchisees
- Customized management of franchisee operations
- Real-time information on transactions, new tour packages and destinations
- Centralized management of franchisees, customers, and the client's operations

Technologies used in developing this application are:



Travel service providers, operating from distant locations and providing specific services to customers, can only meet a portion of customer requirements. For instance, if a traveler needs to tour Agra, a travel agent may be able to manage the airline reservation for the traveler, but perhaps, not the hotel reservations. Similarly, another tour operator may offer the hotel bookings service but the costs may not be feasible for a traveler. On one hand, travelers need to search for multiple travel agents to plan a single tour and on the other hand, travel agents are confined to their specific areas of operations. After identifying and isolating these problems in the travel industry, our client wanted to develop a solution that would act as a 'single point of contact' for travelers, while allowing travel agents the opportunity to grow & expand their business, without incurring any extra costs. They pictured the idea of a network of travel service providers, who would be able to utilize each other's services to offer an entire travel package to their customers. To implement this, the client required a Web-based travel management solution that would allow specialized travel service providers, (such as, a hotel reservation provider or a tour operator), to offer each other's services to their customers. The solution would enable the client to create travel franchisees, who in turn, would be able to create and manage their customers, view their business status in real time and utilize the services of other franchisees. In addition, the solution would allow customers to search for travel service providers and book tours online.

Endeavoring to develop an effective system to meet its goal of mutual profits and cost-effective management, the client teamed with Icreon to develop the solution. We had to develop the application as a feature-rich, easy to use, and scalable application that could be accessed and administered ceaselessly.

The solution is a Web-based travel management application that can be accessed by franchisees, administrator(s), and customers. The way the client planned to operate was to create travel service providers as franchisees and then let them manage their individual operations and customers through the application. The strategy was to market the services of one franchisee through other franchisees.

For instance, if a travel agent operating in New Delhi specializes in providing airline reservations, needs to make hotel reservations for a customer, then the travel agent can search for hotel reservation providers in the client's network, through the application. Once the agent finds the most suitable hotel reservation provider, a booking for the customer can be placed. The hotel reservation provider can check for the booking request through application and confirm the booking status. This way the travel agent can provide value-added service to customers, without any incurring extra costs.

Some of the features of the solution include:

- Real-Time Data that shows Up-to-the-Minute Details
- Facility to Vet and Scrutinize Real-Time Information for Determining Transactions and Profit Ratios

- Proactive and Enhanced Customer Management
- Facility to Search for Reputed Travel Service Providers
- Automated E-mail Alerts for Passport and Visa Expiry
- Instant Tour Booking Facility for Customers

The solution allows franchisees to manage their operations 24/7. This Web-based Business Process Automation solution manages the usage and availability of services provided by franchisees, to organize customized tour packages with airline tickets, hotel bookings, and other services that the customer demands. Franchisees can share their resources online to provide upbeat and 'top of the line' services to customers, while incurring minimal costs.

For us, the aim was to develop the solution as a process-driven application that could be easily accessed by different types of users – Super Administrator, Sub Administrator, Franchisee & Customer. To make Agency Plus extremely effective and feature rich for each of its "User Types", we developed four interfaces for the application, corresponding to each user type.

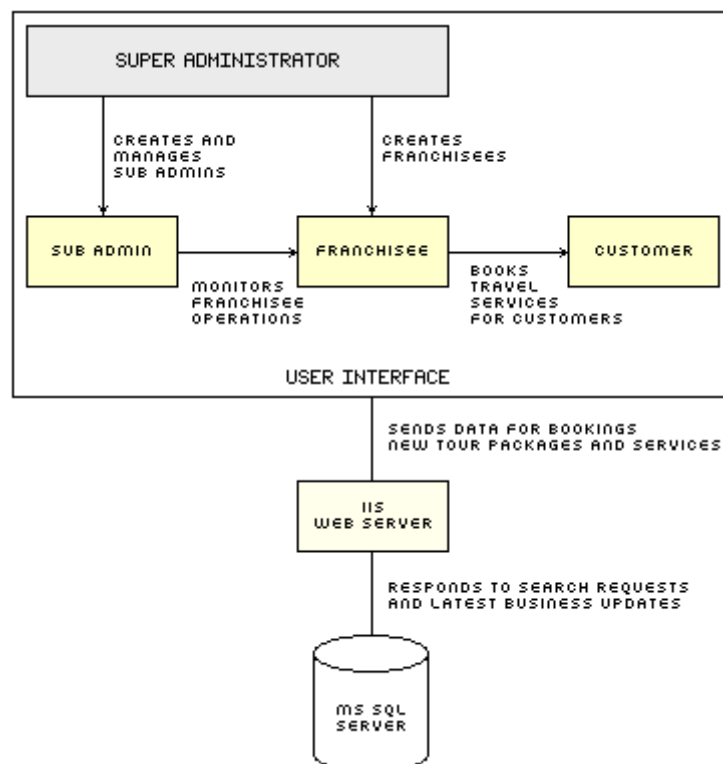
The super administrator module is used to create and manage the accounts of sub administrators and franchisees. The super administrator is responsible for assigning roles to the sub administrator. The role of a sub administrator includes managing a particular service or various services, in one or more cities and states. A new franchisee is authenticated and added to the network, by the super administrator. In addition, the super administrator can add different countries, states, and cities in which the client's franchisees are operating. The sub administrator's role revolves around monitoring travel services such as hotels, packages, restaurants, car rentals, and airline reservations in various travel destinations. The services that the sub administrator monitors depend on the role that the super administrator assigns.

For franchisees, the solution offers a multi-faceted interface. Franchisees can login with the username and password assigned by the super administrator. With the application, they can store information about their services and create packages with complete details about the cost and availability of the package. It tracks the reservations and bookings offered by franchisees, within the network. The data available to franchisees is real-time, providing them the current status of the required information. The application provides franchisees, the ability to manage existing customers and add new customers. Franchisees can configure automated email notifications for passport and visa expiry and resolve customer queries. A franchisee can add tour packages, hotel services, transfers, car rentals, and a host of other services to the list of services. The sub administrator needs to validate these services, to allow the franchisee to sell these services.

For customers, the interface offers innovative services such as, information about various travel destinations, hotels, restaurants, airports, and other services available for the customer's destination of choice. Customers are associated with Agency Plus through a particular franchisee. The username and password supplied by the franchisee, is used by the customer to login to the application. They can view information about the weather and currency of the destination and book tours accordingly with the services that they require. The customer can provide details about the people for whom the tour is being booked. The associated franchisee will book the tour along with the entire range of services for the customer. This way, customers need not go to various different travel agents, and hotels for bookings. They can simply login to the application and book their entire tour from their desktop.

We designed all the interfaces with highly interactive features, providing useful tips right when the user needs them. The application includes a comprehensive Help Desk to allow users complete ease.

The application was developed for high scalability, compatibility, and long-term use. With these considerations for a Web-based solution, a 3-tier architecture based on .NET framework was the best alternate. We suggested and designed the architecture based on these considerations. Following is the technical architecture for the application.



The front-end application was developed on the .NET framework using ASP.NET. SQL Server 2000 is used to function as the database or back-end. The entire application runs on IIS 5.0 web server. We selected these technologies to ensure optimum management of network traffic and high application performance.

Summary

The travel industry is growing at a fast pace and the client seized this opportunity to implement a strategy that would allow travel service providers to grow & expand as a community of reputed travel franchisees. With the solution developed by Icreon, the client's network offers a cost effective alternate for franchisees to offer customized and value-added services to their customers. A high-end travel management solution that automates and manages various tasks for franchisees, the application is designed to meet the present and future growth requirement of the client's network.