

Driving Profitability and Customer Satisfaction with Progress® Software and Bluebird Auto Rental Systems

CHALLENGE

Fuller Rentals needed more visibility into business operations to maintain a productive and profitable business and ensure the highest level of customer service.

SOLUTION

The organization is using the RentWorks loaner and car rental system from Progress® Application Partner Bluebird Auto Rental Systems.

WHY PROGRESS® SOFTWARE

Based on Progress OpenEdge®, RentWorks provides Fuller visibility into business operations, the flexibility to integrate with Fuller's existing systems and the reliability to ensure constant uptime of the business critical application.

BENEFIT

Management reviews financial information in 15 minutes versus 2-3 hours, the customer check-in and check-out processes are 50% faster, and Fuller considers the application a significant contributing factor to its 48 straight months of profitability.

CASE STUDY

To increase profitability and ensure the highest level of customer service, Fuller Rentals is using the RentWorks loaner and car rental solution from Progress Application Partner Bluebird Auto Rental Systems. The depth of visibility RentWorks provides Fuller into business operations enables the company to maintain a productive and profitable business and offer its customers competitive products and services. In business since 1963 and located in Chula Vista, CA, Fuller primarily serves as a Ford rental car systems dealer, but also recently implemented a new Honda loaner program. Fuller manages all of the loaner needs for the local Ford and Honda dealerships in addition to operating a retail car rental business.

LACK OF VISIBILITY, FLEXIBILITY AND SUPPORT

Three years ago, Fuller realized that its existing loaner and rental car system was no longer capable of supporting the needs of the business. Because the system's reporting functionality was extremely limited, the company was unable to access detailed, valuable information about business operations. "We needed the ability to drill down into the data to get a deeper understanding of where we could make positive changes in our business," explains Dave Ward, General Manager for Fuller Rentals. "For example, we wanted the ability to examine the costs and profits associated with a specific vehicle or line. But with the current system, our only option was to generate data on the business at a very high level. We generated utilization and/or profitability data for the entire fleet—far too much information to be truly useful."

Another issue with the existing system was the lack of available support. "There would ultimately be only one or two people in the entire U.S. that could help us with our problems. With a customer-facing business and one that moves as quickly as ours, we can't afford to wait hours or days for help," says Ward. Fuller also faced problems with customer perception. Ward explains, "The previous system ran on old terminals. As we evolved into a PC-based operation, we couldn't drive the kind of business we wanted to drive utilizing the old boxes. When a customer walks in and you have a terminal with an old green screen, they immediately assume the business itself is also behind the times."

The terminal-based systems also raised security concerns. Fuller had a separate machine for credit card processing, and the company found that there were constant errors as employees moved back and forth between the various systems inputting data. "There are so many security and privacy issues that go along with every piece of paper that we generate—it was a nightmare trying to manage it all," says Ward.



"We have been completely profitable for the last 48 months. Having the ability to really look at the things that are hurting you and helping you is a big advantage. It is a big help to have a system that you can rely on to give you accurate information. I can't attribute our profitability entirely to RentWorks but, to be certain, it was and continues to be a major contributing factor."

— Dave Ward
General Manager

THE SEARCH FOR A FLEXIBLE SOLUTION

Ward is not only the General Manager for Fuller Rentals, but he is also the sole IT resource for the organization. When it came time to look for a new solution, he knew exactly what he was looking for.

A new loaner and rental car system had to interface with their Dealer Management System (DMS), integrate with other existing systems like their ADP accounting solution, and have the capability to import Fuller's entire existing customer database. The company was also looking to reduce transaction time. "We wanted to reduce the complication around the check-in and check-out processes," says Ward. "We looked bad when we had employees turning around to run a credit card through a separate machine. It was like the Stone Age."

Reporting flexibility was another critical requirement. Ward needed to achieve greater visibility into business operations in order to reduce costs and improve customer service. The new system also needed excellent security measures to protect customer information and privacy. And lastly, Fuller was looking to work with a software vendor that could provide excellent and responsive customer and technical support.

CHOOSING PROGRESS SOFTWARE AND BLUEBIRD AUTO RENTAL SYSTEMS

After researching the options on the market, Fuller chose RentWorks from Progress Application Partner Bluebird Auto Rental Systems. "Bluebird was more responsive in terms of answering questions and providing access to existing customers using the solution," says Ward. "And when we did contact those users, they had very positive things to say. We were comfortable that the solution could do everything Bluebird said it could do."

RentWorks is a comprehensive application for managing rental fleets, processing customer forms, and performing basic accounting functions. With a unique two-screen rental process, RentWorks provides rental agency personnel with a complete view of customer and automobile information, helping improve the speed and accuracy of the entire auto rental process. It includes credit card processing functionality, revenue splits across reporting structures, and support for multiple languages. Based on the Progress OpenEdge platform, RentWorks provides the flexibility Fuller required to integrate with its existing systems and the reliability to ensure constant uptime of the business critical application.

"The implementation process was very smooth, and the technician was efficient and helpful. In fact, he will still answer questions if I call him directly," says Ward. And the system was extremely simple for employees to learn—important in an industry with a high attrition rate. "Anything Windows-based is much more forgiving," says Ward. "With RentWorks you can easily move around the application. And if you forget something, backing up isn't a sequence of keys, but instead just a mouse click."



IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY

Since implementing RentWorks, Fuller has seen tremendous benefits to its business. “I have a routine that I go through every morning where I come in and look at the company’s current financial status,” explains Ward. “With the old system, that would take me two-to-three hours; with the RentWorks system it takes me 15 minutes. I can tell where we are at for the month, what our utilization is like, and if I see something that seems off I can go to a more specific level. For instance, I could look at a particular unit or group of units that have been sitting still for too long and find out why that is without physically going out and looking at the vehicles. This flexibility saves us approximately one quarter of a person. It certainly gives me more time to devote to higher order priorities, and it allows me time to look deeper into the numbers to determine where our strengths and weaknesses lie.”

INCREASING VISIBILITY AND PROFITABILITY

RentWorks has given Fuller a level of visibility into business operations that it was unable to achieve with its previous system. “With RentWorks I look at fleet information on a monthly or quarterly basis to determine if there are vehicles we are carrying that aren’t generating the income they should given their cost,” says Ward. “For example, Ford makes a Ranger truck that is available in both regular and super cab. In the past, I ordered both and kept them in our fleet, assuming the super cab was generating a greater income. After reviewing information from RentWorks, I realized that in fact the super cab model was generating the exact same income as the compact model. I then made inquiries to our employees and found there is very little request for that model; so we stopped carrying it.”

According to Ward, this improved visibility into business operations has had a substantial impact on their bottom line. “We have been completely profitable for the last 48 months. Having the ability to really look at the things that are hurting you and helping you is a big advantage. It is a big help to have a system that you can rely on to give you accurate information. I can’t attribute our profitability entirely to RentWorks but, to be certain, it was and continues to be a major contributing factor.”

DELIVERING SUPERIOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

One of Fuller’s goals before it implemented the Progress-based system was to improve the turn around time for managing the customer check-in and check-out processes. According to Ward, with RentWorks those processes are at least 50% faster than with their previous system. And with a PC-based system that is fully integrated with their ADP accounting system, employees can now directly face the customer during the entire check-in or check-out process and even turn the flat monitor around to the customer so they can view the information for themselves.

“I think the level of trust is increased when a customer sees you working with the latest equipment. That reflects on how they see your business. Modern, up-to-date technology makes them think you have a progressive, well-run business—and we do,” says Ward.

100% RELIABILITY WITH PROGRESS AND SUPERB SUPPORT FROM BLUEBIRD

"We have never had a downtime related to the RentWorks system. The OpenEdge platform has proven to be completely reliable, almost transparent. I know it is required to run the software, but other than that I never have to think about it," says Ward. "There have been some periods of downtime related to our own doing—how the system posts, interfaces with ADP, etc. Those things come up and that is the whole point of having support. I cannot think of a time that I called into Bluebird for support and did not get a call back within 45 minutes. I am totally happy with the support and service I get."

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BUSINESS AND COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMER EXCELLENCE

According to Ward, he is still discovering new features and functionality of the RentWorks solution. "It has a lot of depth to it. For example, one of our service managers requested that we tell him anytime we have a car that is over a certain number of days on rent. Other than mentally keeping track of that when we do our overdues it is difficult to achieve. But just the other day I found a report that quickly and easily provides this level of information."

To remain competitive and to provide the highest level of service to its customers, Fuller realizes that it must continue to evolve its technology infrastructure. As the company prepares to upgrade four-year old hardware, it is considering options such as Bluebird's Software as a Service (SaaS) offering. "Anything that can positively impact our revenue and productivity is an option. RentWorks has been a tremendous leap forward for us, and Bluebird has a number of other offerings we are considering down the road to support the changing requirements of our business," concludes Ward.

ABOUT BLUEBIRD AUTO RENTAL SYSTEMS (BARS)

Bluebird Auto Rental Systems (BARS) is a provider of cost-effective, turnkey computer systems to vehicle rental operations worldwide. Founded in 1982, the original auto rental division of Bluebird Systems of Carlsbad, CA was spun off into its own company in 1993 as Bluebird Auto Rental Systems, L.P. BARS offers a wide variety of fully integrated software and hardware products, all designed to increase the efficiency and profitability of any size vehicle rental operation. BARS is committed to keeping pace with technology in order to offer the most advanced line of products possible, as well as providing top-notch customer support. Bluebird Auto Rental Systems is a privately held company headquartered in Dover, New Jersey with regional sales and support offices located in Florida, Texas, Wisconsin, Arizona, Canada, England, and the UAE. For more information visit www.barsnet.com.

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ABOUT PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (NASDAQ: PRGS) provides application infrastructure software for the development, deployment, integration and management of business applications. Our goal is to maximize the benefits of information technology while minimizing its complexity and total cost of ownership. Progress can be reached at +1-781-280-4000.

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