



Danish Wholesaler Smartens Web Apps with BCD

by Vicki Hamende

RONI Tools has been in business 89 years and is the largest independent tool wholesaler in Denmark. The company maintains more than 20,000 different stock-keeping units in its Albertslund warehouse. The hand tools it sells come from dozens of international manufacturers such as Bahco, Hultafors, Irwin, and Stanley. In addition to maintaining a prominent position in Denmark's wholesale market, RONI

Tools also serves Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands.

The company deploys its core business applications on an IBM i and uses heavily modified ERP systems and financials to handle the hub of its business requirements. RONI's completely automated warehousing system has helped keep inventory levels accurate to the minute, but customer service representatives

(CSRs) have only been able to check out realtime inventory data through a Lotus Notes/Domino-based system. "Aside from not being able to access order entry and inventory from any location that offered web access, the system did not update DB2/400 database files in realtime. It was also somewhat inflexible and didn't let us add important enhancements," says Jakob Løgstrup, CEO of Robert Nielsen I/S, the RONI Tools IT division.

System i technicians had hoped that the Notes/Domino collaborative software tools would be more tightly coupled with DB2/400, the database integrated into the i operating system, but with the announcement of Notes/Domino 8, IBM ultimately eliminated support for DB2/400 altogether. Because of that, RONI grew uneasy about going forward with Notes/Domino. The Danish company wanted a tune-up.

So, RONI sought a new tool for its repertoire. It discovered Business Computer Design's (BCD) WebSmart ILE.

The New Plan

BCD Nordic, which serves Denmark, Norway, Finland,



FIGURE 1

RONI Tools headquarters in Albertslund, Denmark

Sweden, and Iceland, has partnered with BCD for 17 years to sell, service, and support BCD's modernization software. BCD Nordic created an advanced CRM and B2B website for RONI Tools so that the company could access DB2/400 data and instantly deliver it to CSRs in a secure and easy-to-use browser-based application.

BCD Nordic built the site using WebSmart ILE, an i web application development tool. Now, RONI CSRs can check inventory, place new orders, and view pending orders in realtime through a secure web browser application. BCD has also created several embellishments that extend the product's functionality and value beyond what the RONI Tools managers initially envisioned. One such application is a rebate tracking system that lets CSRs apply rebates to new orders and save their dealers money on purchases. CSRs can access time-saving Google Maps to simplify will-call pickups, and managers can

VENDOR CONTACT INFORMATION

BCD Nordic

bcd@bcdnordic.dk

www.bcdnordic.dk

WebSmart ILE

CASE STUDY

tap instantly into a variety of reports.

With WebSmart ILE version 6.6, developers can pull data from DB2/400 as well as SQL Server and MySQL databases and still run their web applications on the i.

The new version of WebSmart offers intellis prompting, which saves programmers time by showing them all the ProGen Macro Language commands that correspond to the first few letters they type. For example, if a programmer enters the letter “g,” all functions starting with “g” appear on the screen with descriptive lines that show parameter types and return values.

WebSmart ILE 6.6 also features an integrated HTML editor. Previously, WebSmart users had to employ Adobe Dreamweaver or Microsoft FrontPage and make sure that the back-end development matched what appeared on the front end. With a new preview function, users can drag and drop text, images, and database fields directly onto the screen. The product also includes templates for creating HTML, JavaScript, and Cascading Style Sheets and can rename fields within the IDE.

The Web Connection

BCD Nordic also delivers CRM-type functions to RONI Tools WebSmart applications. CSRs can enter private comments on customer preferences that are viewable only by other employees. This information is automatically attached to orders so that CSRs and others can make better informed decisions on how to process them.

“Customer service representatives had no access to core business applications via the web until we created this system,” says Olav Christensen, principal partner at BCD Nordic. “Now they can process orders, monitor order flow, look up inventory information, and much more on a 24/7 basis. RONI sees the potential for this system to dramatically improve productivity, the management of customer credit, and customer service for years to come,” he adds.

Løgstrup says the company has been using web applications to handle CRM for more than a year. “We can already see the great benefit of our investment and of the new functionality. This is definitely a tool that we have benefit out of now and will have in the future,” he reports.

The CEO also points out that RONI has a popular customer site. “With the average number of visits per day at more than 1,500, I think this speaks for itself. We also have more resources from our call center, and the customers now have direct access to what they need 24/7. The range of information extends all the time,” Løgstrup says.

The WebSmart Difference

“The applications we developed with WebSmart are far easier to use than their predecessors, and they are significantly steadier,” Christensen says. “This development environment is flexible enough to let us give RONI Tools all the function-

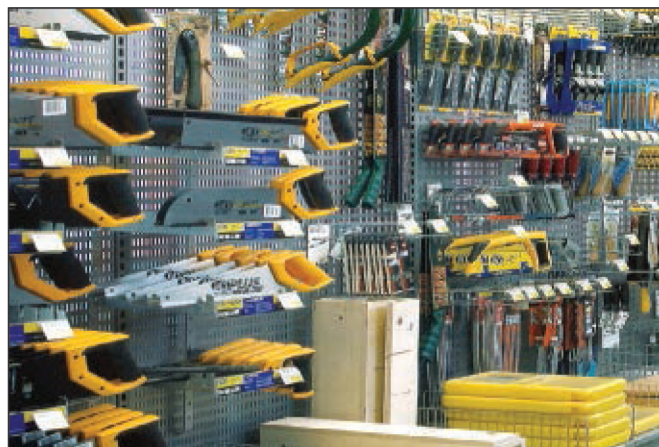


FIGURE 2
RONI Tools products

ally that existed in the previous solution, and then some. With WebSmart, there is no limit to what we can do.”

Løgstrup says Notes/Domino still remains in the picture. “In the future I see that it is more a collaboration with Notes/Domino than a replacement of functions that we will work on—extension to the calendar function, deployment of manuals, detailed article information, and so on.” Løgstrup adds that WebSmart has provided direct access to live data on the RONI Tools system. “We’ve had no generation problems regarding replication,” he says.

For RONI Tools in Denmark, BCD’s smart ILE tool provided just the tune-up it needed for its web applications. ■

► **Vicki Hamende** is a senior editor for *System iNEWS*.