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THE ENTERPRISE NEWSWEEKLY

## Vertical Slice: Travel

# Cunard: Data ahoy!

QUEEN MARY 2 TO SET SAIL WITH INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM

By Brian Fonseca

**W**HEN THE QUEEN MARY 2 LUXURY LINER embarks on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., next month, a crew of some 1,200 will look to pamper 2,620 guests.

The Cunard Line Ltd. cruise ship—the largest ocean liner ever built—features 14 decks that offer sports facilities, five pools, 10 restaurants, spas, shops, lounges, a planetarium and a bookstore. To make guest services run smoothly and keep the QM2's IT systems operating efficiently in the background, Cunard deployed Discovery Travel Systems LP software, which weaves together a cashless billing environment, security ID system and interactive guest accommodations tools.

DTS' Ship Partner software integrates multiple third-party technologies, said Jeff Richman, director of business solutions and application development for Miami-based Cunard. As such, it powers QM2's complex property management system in handling embarkation and disembarkation information capture, multiple point-of-sale interfaces, and shipboard amenity systems.

DTS, of Alexandria, Va., developed the application to service QM2 using technology based on the OpenEdge platform from Progress Co., an operating unit of Progress Software Corp., of Bedford, Mass. OpenEdge features an application development environment that supports several standards, including Java 2 Platform, Enterprise Edition; Java Message Service; Web services; and XML. The product includes an embedded database, management functions and a Web-browser-enabled GUI.

"A lot of different things can go wrong when a lot of different [systems from different companies] are interacting," said Richman. "The objective here was to streamline and integrate the varied means of guest identification on the ship."

As part of this integration project, Cunard used OpenEdge to create a Guest ID KeyCard unique to each passenger. It can be used to interface with the ship's systems to allow entry into the passenger's cabin, speed up point-of-sale transactions, and provide additional security during embarkation and disembarkation.

For instance, the ID card enables a cashless experience via a billing system that receives

charge information through online interfaces with a variety of systems, including retail stores, telephones, in-cabin minibars, passenger cabin televisions and a Wi-Fi Internet cafe. Richman said charges are directly entered and received from integrated modules across the ship. The system can print statements in multiple languages and convert currency.

DTS will introduce aboard QM2 Ship Partner Shore Excursion Module, which takes advantage of WebSpeed, an OpenEdge client processing technology offering high-transaction volumes for browser-based applications. The program features a Web user interface allowing passengers to examine and book outings directly from their cabins using their interactive TV and the ship's billing system.

DTS' property management system ties into a digital interactive television application from IDF GmbH. The technology allows guests to download, purchase and choose digital photographs taken during the journey.

Using a TV, guests can get an early peek at and make choices from their dinner menu. They can order breakfast from bed, specifying delivery time, and set a wake-up time to be given by phone, alarm or TV.

"The technology is there; it's just coming up with ways to apply it to enhance guest experience [that] is the challenge," said Richman.

To comply with newer federal regulations, Richman said DTS used the OpenEdge platform to build a customized manifest application to accurately track embarkation and disembarkation of every passenger.

"One thing that can be a sour experience if handled incorrectly is how to handle a couple thousand people all coming to [the] ship at [the] same time and having to go through passport, clearance," said Richman. "Capturing all this information in that short period of time with really no margin for error is extremely critical." e



## PROGRESS SOFTWARE

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