

Simplifying Operations with Software as a Service (SaaS) from Bluebird Auto Rental Systems and Progress®

CHALLENGE

Jackson Dollar wanted to avoid the costs and complexities of building out IT infrastructure so it could focus on its core business.

SOLUTION

The organization selected a Software as a Service (SaaS) solution from Progress® Partner Bluebird Auto Rental Systems (BARS).

WHY PROGRESS® SOFTWARE

The flexibility and reliability of Progress OpenEdge® provide the speed and accuracy the company needs to successfully manage the entire auto rental process.

BENEFIT

Management can focus on the company's core competency without the demands of building and managing an internal infrastructure, and Jackson Dollar is driving profit growth with the ability to make pricing decisions based on easy access to real-time information.

GAINING ACCESS TO CENTRALIZED INFRASTRUCTURE

More companies are turning to the concept of Software as a Service (SaaS) based on the premise that customers should regard software not as a product, but as a service, with the focus being on the value the customer derives from the software service. Dollar Rent a Car of Jackson Hole, Wyoming (Jackson Dollar) relies on a SaaS solution from Bluebird Auto Rental Systems—a Progress Application Partner—to run its business. Jackson Dollar has streamlined operations and reduced its IT costs by relying on Web-based access to Bluebird's NetRent vehicle rental software.

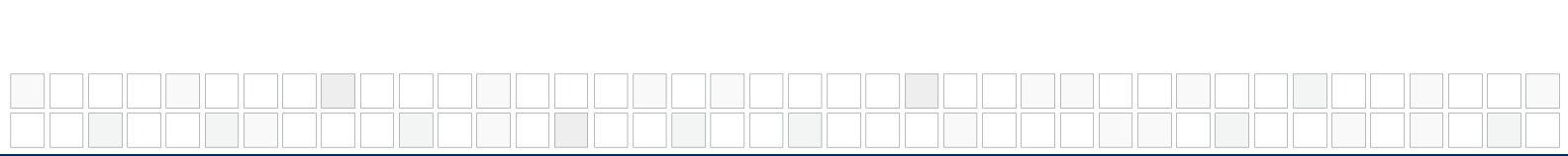
Jackson Dollar started as an independent car rental firm named Aspen Rent a Car, and licensed the RentWorks vehicle software from Bluebird, which is packed with features such as reservation sales, fleet utilization, rate management, and accounting interfaces. RentWorks captures all rental and vehicle information in the Progress OpenEdge 10 business platform, and it is written and updated using Progress OpenEdge development tools.

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.

The rental car company became affiliated with the Dollar Thrifty Automotive Group (DTAG) to capitalize on DTAG's business infrastructure and lead-generation capabilities. DTAG is a Fortune 1000 company and has over 800 corporate and franchised locations in the United States. DTAG requires franchisees to have a Frame Relay connection to be part of the Dollar Licensee Speed of Service program to receive reservations and share customer and rental contract data.

Jackson Dollar was faced with the cost of acquiring and maintaining a router and paying for a monthly Frame Relay connection. At the same time, the company was seeking remote access to business information and the ability to better manage IT infrastructure costs.

CASE STUDY



Jackson Dollar had been maintaining RentWorks internally on a server, but was paying a local consulting firm to maintain the server, and consulting fees were getting costly.

“If we got a virus or needed operating system updates or any maintenance support, we would have a local computer systems consultant on-site to manage the server. But our monthly IT operational costs continued to increase,” said Mike Sewell, owner of Jackson Dollar.

“Bluebird was providing great support and highly reliable software, but at a time when we were looking for more features and a greater reliance on IT, we wanted to eliminate the need to worry about server hardware, the server operating system, viruses and networking issues.”

SELECTING SOFTWARE AS A SERVICE

Meanwhile, Bluebird was evolving its RentWorks application so it could be delivered in a SaaS business model. According to Angela Margolit, president of Bluebird, “SaaS is very important to the auto rental industry because, as with most small businesses, car rental companies want to control costs and minimize investments in buying and operating computer systems. If an auto rental company has more than one location or is affiliated with a rental chain, they usually have to pay an IT company to maintain a wide area network (WAN) or build a Virtual Private Network (VPN), and this can be costly.”

Because RentWorks was built using development tools from Progress Software and it relies on the OpenEdge business platform, Bluebird was able to efficiently migrate the license-based solution to create its NetRent SaaS offering. According to Margolit, “Progress makes it easy and efficient for its Application Partners to move to a SaaS model. Progress offers flexible partnership agreements, pricing flexibility, and go-to-market programs that help application software vendors offer their customers SaaS solutions.”

“We were happy with the RentWorks features and service, but we needed to evolve our infrastructure to avoid major investments in networking and avoid the costs and hassles of maintaining, upgrading, and securing a server,” said Sewell.

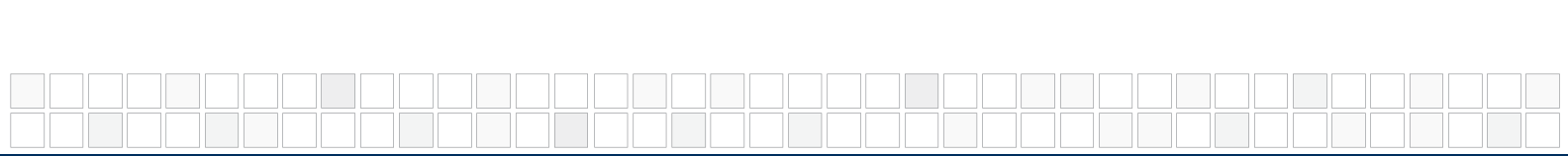
Bluebird launched the NetRent service, and Jackson Dollar quickly realized the advantages of this Web-based solution available via the Internet or the public phone network. Jackson Dollar would no longer have to maintain its server, and the company could more efficiently manage WAN connections and control both infrastructure costs and bandwidth charges.

“If a car doesn't start or a computer system doesn't work, I'm in a lot of trouble,” said Sewell. “The idea of making a software vendor accountable for daily operation of our application allows us to more clearly focus on our business, so we spend our time doing what we do best—serving our customers and managing our business.”

Jackson Dollar quickly migrated to NetRent. For a low start-up cost, auto rental companies can now “rent” auto rental software that is available for a modest per-transaction fee. Jackson Dollar's existing RentWorks software license was applied to NetRent, so it was a seamless and cost-effective migration to SaaS. Transition costs were minor, and the data in the

“If a car doesn't start or a computer system doesn't work, I'm in a lot of trouble. The idea of making a software vendor accountable for daily operation of our application allows us to more clearly focus on our business so we spend our time doing what we do best—serving our customers and managing our business.”

— Mike Sewell
Owner



RentWorks application was ported to run on a Bluebird-hosted server in New Jersey. Jackson Dollar connects to NetRent via DSL, and the hosting facility has Frame Relay links for connectivity to the DTAG vehicle reservation system.

“Allowing our core technology application to be available as a service simplifies operations for our customers and allows us to add increased value,” said Margolit. “We implement any required server, operating system, or application upgrades, and our customers don't have to worry about these issues. We also backup their data every night and provide the security necessary to protect against malicious threats, hackers, and viruses. By creating NetRent as a SaaS offering, Bluebird delivers more value to our customers and allows them to focus on their core business and not worry about IT infrastructure, WAN connections, remote access, and security.”

Bluebird has migrated many other Dollar locations to NetRent, and each now avoids the need to pay for a Frame Relay connection and install a Frame Relay router. They avoid the time-consuming and potentially distracting responsibilities for operating a server on-site, and they benefit from a usage-based financial model where they pay for NetRent on a per-transaction fee.

SECURING THE ENTERPRISE

Jackson Dollar had previously fallen victim to several viruses, and this risk has been dramatically reduced. Bluebird's hosting facility offers extensive firewall and content filtering support to identify and prevent viruses and other security threats. Bluebird has also developed several security features to protect information. For example, a user that logs in and requests a report cannot download it. Instead, it is emailed to pre-approved email addresses to ensure that only authorized users can access reports.

IMPROVING OPERATIONS

Sewell and his wife are actively involved in business management, and they now have access to the business application running at Bluebird's hosting center from their home via a DSL connection. “I focus on procuring and selling fleet vehicles, and on setting and revising rental rates,” said Sewell. “I can access NetRent from home to review business operations, and I can change rental rates in seconds. I now have greater access to operational information, and I can access this information securely from anywhere.”

Sewell frequently visits automobile auctions that are located hundreds of miles away, yet he can still access real-time inventory and reservation information to evaluate supply and demand and establish rental rates. “Whether I'm 32 miles away and working from home or hundreds of miles away buying or selling vehicles, I gain password-protected access to the real-time information needed to make informed pricing decisions that protect margins,” said Sewell. “Our expertise is in car rental, car procurement and selling fleet vehicles, and NetRent allows us to focus on our core strengths and rely on technology experts to manage our applications.”

ABOUT BLUEBIRD AUTO RENTAL SYSTEMS

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.

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.

Worldwide Headquarters

Progress Software Corporation, 14 Oak Park, Bedford, MA 01730 USA
Tel: +1 781 280-4000 Fax: +1 781 280-4095
On the Web at: www.progress.com

For regional international office locations and contact information, please refer to the Web page below:

<http://www.progress.com/worldwide>

© 2007 Progress Software Corporation. All rights reserved. Progress and OpenEdge are trademarks or registered trademarks of Progress Software Corporation or one of its affiliates or subsidiaries in the U.S. and other countries. Any other trademarks contained herein are the property of their respective owners. Specifications subject to change without notice.

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.

www.progress.com

PROGRESS
SOFTWARE