



Advanced Business Solutions [Advanced] provides leading integrated business applications and services that enable public, private and third-sector organizations to retain control, improve visibility and gain efficiencies while continually improving corporate performance.



THE CHALLENGE: DEVELOP A MOBILE EXPENSE CLAIMS APP

Businesses are increasingly looking for ways to improve the efficiency of their internal processes in order to realize cost savings. One way to achieve this is by deploying a self-service approach that pushes out the processing of certain tasks to the user community. The processing of employee expenses can be a massive overhead in organizations, especially those who still rely on paper-based expense reporting.

“Employee expense reporting is a process that can be open to fraud or leakage if the claims are not accurate or verified against the expenses policy rigorously enough,” said Simon Fowler, Managing Director of Advanced Business Solutions. “Providing the ability to submit expense claims via a mobile device is an obvious step. Enabling expense claims to be built at source is even more obvious, especially if the app could enforce the rules of the expense policy to prevent inaccurate claims. Since employees who submit expense payments are often based remotely, a mobile expense application enables them to keep on top of their expense claims, preventing the risk of lost receipts and encouraging users to submit expense reports regularly, aiding the business cash flow.”

Advanced wanted the ability to record images of receipts to eliminate the need to transport and archive paper, and wanted to develop a mobile expense application that could be used when employees were on or offline.

“We didn’t want to build an app that relied on a data connection – we wanted employees to be able to use their app when out in the field, sometimes without a strong signal or Wi-Fi access.” “We also wanted to design an app that was different from traditional desktop interfaces and which reflected how intuitive mobile applications are to use by anyone, without training or manuals” continues Fowler.

SOLUTION: PROGRESS® OPENEDGE® MOBILE FOR IOS AND ANDROID

Advanced has been a Partner of Progress for over 20 years, and develops its business applications on the Progress OpenEdge platform. After defining the requirements for its mobile expense application, Advanced evaluated Progress OpenEdge Mobile and developed several proof-of-concept designs.

CHALLENGE

Develop a mobile app that would allow users to submit expense claims from their mobile phones and tablets

SOLUTION

Progress OpenEdge Mobile ensured the app would be compatible with multiple mobile platforms without the need to learn device-specific languages or development environments

BENEFIT

Extend the value of its proven financial management solutions with a highly differentiated mobile application that increases productivity for mobile users and efficiency for the enterprise

Progress OpenEdge Mobile provides an integrated all-encompassing mobile user interface (UI) development platform to quickly and easily extend existing, or create new OpenEdge applications to support mobile users. With the new OpenEdge Mobile App Builder and visual designer it is simple to produce feature-rich mobile apps for the iOS and Android platforms with a write once, run anywhere approach. OpenEdge Mobile also provides an intuitive, highly productive visual designer for easy drag-and-drop development of mobile user interfaces, and an automated mobile application builder and mobile device emulation for testing.

“We’re accustomed to building apps for desktop interfaces which can be a lengthy process. Progress OpenEdge Mobile provided a rapid route to developing mobile apps,” said Fowler. “Progress OpenEdge Mobile’s visual designer was a great help and made developing a mobile application 2-3x times faster than possible with competing solutions.”

Advanced developed a series of proof-of-concept designs for management review, leading to the final definition of the functionality of the new app and funding for its development. Just three months after starting the development an initial release was available.

This innovative new expenses app is fully integrated with the company’s workflow engine eBIS, and its financial management application OpenAccounts, enabling users to record and submit expense claims via their smartphones or tablets. The claim information is then uploaded into Advanced’s eBIS and OpenAccounts solutions, submitted through a pre-defined approval workflow and then to financial management personnel for processing. At any stage, expenses can be authorized, rejected or more information requested from the employee.

OpenMobile Expenses has been initially developed for the IOS and Android platforms. “Advanced chose the Progress OpenEdge Mobile App Builder because of its write once, run anywhere functionality that enabled us to ensure the app was compatible with multiple mobile platforms without the need to learn device-specific languages or development environments,” explained Fowler.

The app can be pre-set with mandatory fields in order to capture key information, such as dates, the reasons for the expense and the amount. The expenses can be easily categorized via a simple drop-down menu. All expenses are automatically checked to ensure adherence to company policies—such as the maximum cost per meal—and those expenses that exceed these rules are automatically flagged for user review. The application is also integrated with an online mileage application that calculates the distance between travel points. This ensures the complete accuracy of mileage and fuel claims before they are submitted.

THE BENEFITS

“The technical support from Progress has been fantastic, and the Progress user groups have been very helpful. They’ve given us ideas and technical feedback on our designs that we’ve incorporated,” said Fowler. “We are now looking at other key business processes that would be good candidates for using Progress OpenEdge Mobile to develop mobile applications.”

“Eliminating a manual process allows each employee to make more efficient use of their time,” Fowler continued. “For example, our R&D team was an early user of the beta version – quickly they realized how easy it was to photograph receipts and fill in and submit an expense claim in about 5 minutes, whereas in the past it could have taken up to an hour. Traditionally, employees have to gather their receipts, copy them, fill in an Excel spreadsheet, staple everything together and submit the expense claim and many employees did expense claims in their personal time.

OpenMobile Expenses will provide employees with the ability to log expenses at the point they incur them, simplifying and streamlining the workflow. Expenses can be logged while the mobile device is offline, so employees can make productive use of travel time. Data entry is much faster, since users can easily duplicate past expenses such as rail tickets or previous mileage claims, or save frequent expenses as “favorites” and recall them from drop-down

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menus. Employees can increase their personal and family time, since they no longer have to complete their expense claims at home and can do them while on the road by just logging each transaction as they occur.

Employers benefit from reduced overhead from paper transport and archiving, and from more efficient reporting. For example, mileage claims are now 100% accurate since distances are automatically calculated between travel locations using integration with Microsoft Bing. "Accurate distance calculations may sound like just saving rounding errors in an expense report, but multiply the money saved by precise reimbursement calculations on each expense claim times the hundreds or even thousands of expense claims submitted each year and you can see the financial benefits to the company," said Fowler.

OpenMobile Expenses was approved for distribution on its initial submission to the iTunes store and is expected to be available soon on iTunes and Google Play. It is already receiving industry accolades having recently won the Progress App Development Challenge, which recognizes innovation and creativity, commercial appeal, performance and overall user experience, and has been shortlisted for the prestigious Business Finance Award that will be presented later this year.

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*Simon Fowler
Managing Director
Advanced Business Solutions*

ABOUT ADVANCED BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Advanced Business Solutions provides leading integrated business applications and services that enable public, private and third-sector organizations to retain control, improve visibility and gain efficiencies while continually improving corporate performance. Advanced prides itself on getting close to its customers by understanding their businesses and responding to their evolving needs. Advanced's software systems comprise core accounting/financial management, procurement, supply chain management, human resource and payroll systems integrated with a range of collaborative, document management and business intelligence solutions to extend the value and effectiveness of the finance, human resource and payroll departments. Visit www.advancedcomputersoftware.com for more information.

PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation [NASDAQ: PRGS] is a global software company that simplifies the development, deployment and management of business applications on-premise or in the cloud, on any platform or device, to any data source, with enhanced performance, minimal IT complexity and low total cost of ownership.

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