

Trans World Entertainment Enriches Customer Experience and Improves Performance of “Listening-Viewing” System

Keane Implements Application Enhancements That Improve Functionality of Retail Giant’s In-Store Customer Self-Service System, Enabling Client to Promote and Cross-Sell Products More Effectively

Abstract

First contracted to provide ongoing maintenance, support, and enhancement services to Trans World Entertainment Corporation’s new Listening-Viewing Stations (LVSs), Keane has enabled the retail entertainment giant to make system improvements that have boosted performance, reduced labor costs, and brought shoppers a better customer experience. As a result, these in-store, customer self-service devices have become integral to shoppers’ purchasing habits, allowing Trans World to further engage its customers and drive sales. Additionally, the redesigned and re-architected LVS system positions it for future functionality.

Business Challenges

Trans World Entertainment operates a chain of over 1,100 retail stores (including FYE, Coconuts, Strawberries, Sam Goody, and Suncoast), offering a broad selection of music, DVDs, and video games. In 2002, the company introduced the customer self-service Listening-Viewing Stations across 600 stores, which were designed to increase the sales of its products primarily by enabling customers to sample CDs and view movie trailers before making a purchase. While Trans World recognized the potential of these devices to do more than provide product sampling, the company first had to resolve stability issues that are inherent with any initial rollout.

Solution

In the fall of 2002, Trans World Entertainment contracted Keane to provide ongoing maintenance, support, and enhancement services for the LVS system. By the end of that year, Keane’s team of software engineers stabilized the system and, during the following two years, made incremental enhancements to its user interface and functionality.

By 2004, Trans World Entertainment wanted to build a new model that would take its functionality to the next level. In 2005, a new project was begun to completely redesign and re-architect the LVS system.

Specifically, Keane:

- Re-engineered the software and infrastructure of the central processing system — which is responsible for distributing product data, media samples, and software updates to the LVS devices daily.
- Built a centralized search facility to enable faster searches and easier maintenance and changes. Prior to this, search functionality resided in the distributed store servers.
- Developed a customized remote installation tool similar to the Microsoft Updater function which allows application updates and enhancements to be downloaded automatically from the central processor to LVS store servers overnight.
- Migrated the LVS system from a VB6 and ASP environment to .Net. Keane also replaced 200 legacy store servers

“Keane’s implementation approach not only eliminated data content issues, but also maximized efficiencies. The result has been a better customer experience for our LVS users. The objectives for the coming year will be aggressive, and Keane will play a major part in accomplishing them.”

Court Newton, Director of Store Systems, Trans World Entertainment Corporation

that now run on SQL Express and Windows 2003.

Results

Users of the LVS system now enjoy a richer user experience that enables them to more easily find product information and sample a greater number of newly released products tailored to their preferences. With an average of 20 devices operating within each store, these self-service devices have become an integral part of customers’ purchasing behavior, allowing Trans World to drive sales and reduce returns. What’s more, the redesigned LVS system is positioned for future enhancements. By partnering with Keane, Trans World has experienced the following benefits:

- More samples: Samples of 75% of products are now available within the same day that the products are released as a result of Keane’s re-engineered central processing system.
- Centralized search: The centralized search facility provides a more robust

Client Story: US Music and Video Retailer

search engine, allowing for faster searches and variations on search parameters (such as the spelling of an artist's name). Because the application's business rules can be updated in a single location, modification and maintenance are faster and easier.

- Better device performance: By re-engineering the software and infrastructure of the central processing system, Keane significantly improved device performance and screen display times.
- Greater productivity and flexibility: Using Keane's customized software updater tool, Trans World can download software updates to store servers in four hours, a significant improvement to the weeks required to update software manually. As a result, Trans World estimates it will save about 1,200 hours in labor a year. In addition, the remote installation tool gives Trans World the flexibility to make functional changes quickly and easily.

- More robust environment: By moving LVS to a .Net environment, the system now runs on a fully vendor-supported, robust framework that provides a solid foundation for Trans World and Keane to grow and maintain the system.

Coming Attractions

As Keane's and Trans World Entertainment's partnership continues, the company is looking to enhance the LVS system to create an even richer customer experience, such as allowing customers to place special orders for upcoming movie releases, purchase CDs from nearby stores, and to digitally download audio and video products.

Results

- By redesigning and re-architecting the Listening-Viewing system, Keane significantly improved device performance and has laid a solid foundation for future functionality. Specific benefits include:
- Keane has reduced the time required to implement software updates — from several weeks to just four hours — an estimated savings of 1,200 labor hours over the course of a year.
- 75% of newly released product samples are available within the same day of release.
- Keane's centralized search function enables faster searches and easier maintenance and changes.

Keane is a global services firm that specializes in enabling transformation of its clients' business and IT functions.