LANSA Case Study

CBH uses LANSA to collect harvest estimates from 10,000 growers

Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited (CBH) is owned and controlled by the grain growers of Western Australia. CBH receives, handles, stores and outloads up to 12 million tonnes of grain per year, 40% of Australia's total production, at 196 receival points throughout the grain belt of Western Australia. CBH uses a LANSA Web application to collect the yearly harvest estimates from its growers. Gathering estimates and other details is a large logistic operation where CBH mails 10,000 multiple-page forms to its growers. The LANSA Web application integrates with CBH's core Synon application and was developed and implemented in just five weeks by LANSA business partner Lateral.

Tony Critch, Deputy Chair of the CBH Board of Directors, explains the benefits of the eBusiness project. "Making business decisions on the farm can be difficult without the right information. Due to the remote locations of many of our growers, accessing that information can be extremely difficult. CBH's eBusiness strategy is about making that information easily accessible to growers."

The Challenge

Chris Porter, Customer Service Representative, explains the yearly cycle. "Around late May or early June the grain farmers carry out their sowing operations. At that time CBH sends out 'estimate' forms to approximately 10,000 farmers and asks them to return those forms to us with their estimates of the grains, varieties and number of hectares that they are planting. The form also contains pages to update client contact details and property information."

"Based on that information our operations people plan how to store the various quantities of grain in the silos at harvest time in October, and calculate whether we have sufficient capacity. We have to plan our use of infrastructure and facilities as accurately as possible. So the information we get from the growers is vital in our logistical planning process."

"It is a costly operation to mail out 10,000 forms, receive them back and enter all the details manually into our system within the short seasonal time frame. We also follow up additional information. The whole process is a significant administrative burden on the organization."

"The new application will reduce the very time consuming business for us to key in 10,000 estimate forms."

"We chose a Web solution which could help us to provide a better service to our grower customers, as well as streamlining our administrative process."

"The decision to implement the estimate system was made close to the time that we were actually going to mail out the estimate forms. It was very close to planting season. Confident that we could deliver results on time, we decided to communicate on our printed forms 'If you wish to submit this information via the Internet, go to our Web site.' We only had five weeks to implement a solution."

The Solution, in five weeks

Peter Drew, Information Systems Manager CBH, explains "Last year we allowed the growers for the first time to log into our Web site and look up information about their loads already delivered. That was really the first phase of this project, which used Java and WebSphere®."

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"The second phase was to include entry of harvest estimates, contact details, property information and card requests."

"Because we only had five weeks for the second phase, we decided to leave Java and look for another tool as Java has a steep learning curve. We didn't have the in house Java skills and we couldn't get those skills easily from outside. We thought that maybe LANSA could help us this time. We knew about LANSA from Lateral, who had proposed using LANSA for the first phase."

Kevin Wohling, director Lateral says, "I felt confident that we could build the application and get it up and running in five weeks time, so we accepted the project. We immediately started with the design specifications and soon after that with the building of the site. We assigned one man to this project. He met CBH's schedule on time and on budget. We could not have done this with any other tool than LANSA."

"Time and productivity was the main reason why we chose LANSA," agrees Peter, "but our relationship with Lateral was also part of it. Lateral has been our IT business partner for over ten years and certainly showed commitment and dedication to the task."

The Benefits

"The obvious advantage of going to the Web is that the growers are given the opportunity to perform their own data entry. The new application will reduce the very time consuming business for us to key in 10,000 estimate forms," explains Peter.

Chris agrees, "We expect to cut down our in-house work significantly. Also, we expect more timely entry of the information and better accuracy now that the growers can enter their own details. But just as important, the feedback from our growers is that they now find it easier to interact with our organization."

"There was no need to train the growers in using the Web site. We asked for the system to be as simple as possible, which I think is very well achieved. We kept the wording on the Web pages consistent with the paper forms, so the growers recognize most of it. We also offer help pages that explain what each question is about. I feel the Web site is simple enough and there is no need for training."

"The growers that have been using the Web site understand that this site reduces their work load. They are spreading the word and we expect hundreds of growers to come on-line this year, eventually to grow to thousands during the

"LANSA delivered what we wanted in a five week time frame."

coming years."

Integrating LANSA, Synon and WebSphere

Clinton Hall, Technical Specialist from CBH says "We have used Synon/2e for almost ten years and have developed a very comprehensive grain handling system in Synon. Because I come from a background of developing applications in Synon, I am used to getting results very quickly. LANSA is similar in that respect."

"Our solution for the first phase is quite complex and involves a lot of technologies, including WebSphere®, Java, XML, LDAP and MQSeries. Whereas the LANSA solution was simpler in that respect."

"We did face some technology issues, mainly related to our older version of Domino Web server and WebSphere®. We worked around these issues knowing that LANSA could still produce the goods on time. We thought that LANSA could deliver what we wanted in the five week time frame, and that expectation turned out to be correct."

The Future

"This user friendly Web site represents a significant milestone in the development and execution of CBH's eBusiness strategy and is the start of CBH electronic services to growers," says Imre Mencshelyi, CBH Chief Executive Officer. "The thrust of CBH's eBusiness strategy is to provide efficiencies in the supply chain which will in turn reduce costs to growers and allow them to make informed decisions which will enhance their profitability."

"A lot of this Web solution has been driven by our customer services department, but growers are not our only customers," adds Peter. "The grain marketers are very large customers of ours. There is a huge opportunity for us to transact electronic business with them through the Web."

"The project to exchange information with farmers over the Web has been painless," concludes Kevin. "LANSA has proven its productivity claims and let us deliver a solution that nobody else could, given the time frame. We feel confident that LANSA will help us with future eBusiness projects for CBH and our other customers."

Company and System Information

- Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited (CBH), incorporated in 1933, received its highest volume of grain in the 1999/2000 season: 12,150,000 tonnes, comprising of 11 grain types representing 67 segregations. The Company annually stores and handles up to 40% of Australia's national average grain production. Over 95% of the Western Australian crop is exported to international markets through CBH port terminal facilities.
- CBH's LANSA Web solution runs on an AS/400 model 720, serving HTML to the IIS Web server on an IBM® Pentium III.
- The Company has 196 RS/6000 Unix Servers at the receival points and four AS/400s in the head office. A model 720 for the Synon core application and LANSA Web extensions, a model 170 for development, a model 720 for administration (SAP modules) and another model 720 for SAP development and testing.
- For more information visit www.cbh.com.au
- Lateral (WA) Pty Ltd is an IBM® and LANSA Business partner, employing IT specialists for a wide area of services.
- For more information visit www.lateralwa.com.au

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