

Microsoft Government SQL Server Customer Solution

CASE STUDY

Kootenai County Treasury Sales Tax Division

SQL Server-Based Tax Application Helps County
Raise and Process Funds Faster

Solution Overview

Customer Profile

The Kootenai County Treasury, Sales Tax Division administrates all taxes collected in the county.

Business Situation

Kootenai County had six months to implement tax administration procedures and an IT system to help manage them before its new retail sales tax came into effect.

Solution

The county selected GenTax®, a commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) tax administration software based on Microsoft technology.

Benefits

- Easily integrated platforms helped the county to quickly deploy its new tax system.
- Microsoft-based applications are familiar to end-users.
- GenTax® COTS solution is affordable and scalable.

Software and Services

SQL Server™ 7.0
Windows NT® 4.0
Windows NT® 4.0
Workstation
Microsoft Transaction Server
Visual Studio®
Enterprise with Visual Basic 6.0
Microsoft Word 2000

Partner

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The sales tax division of the Kootenai County Treasury in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho is responsible for all the local tax dollars collected in the County, including property taxes. In May 2000, the County passed a five-year ordinance that established a 0.5 percent retail sales tax to underwrite remodeling and expansion of the county jail.

The County had six months to develop tax administration procedures and implement an information technology infrastructure before the new tax came into effect. Time was especially critical because the County had to register and issue permits to 5,000 merchants before the collection process could begin. It selected Boise, Idaho-based Fast Enterprises to configure and install GenTax®, an online transaction-processing (OLTP) product implemented with Microsoft Visual Basic 6.0 and SQL Server 7.0.

Kootenai County Treasury staff had considered either writing a tax application in-house or outsourcing the project. The need for speedy roll-out—plus the fact that the State of Idaho already was working with Fast Enterprises to implement a new tax administration package—led the County to choose Fast's commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) tax solution, GenTax®.

"We knew that Fast Enterprises' solution would comply with Idaho code," says Kootenai County Treasurer Tom Malzahn. "And we also wanted to make sure that the application would be supported after the project ended."

Furthermore, using a Microsoft platform was important to the County as a whole, because its long-range plans include migrating from its currently heterogeneous networks to a Windows-only environment for all its programs. GenTax® is based entirely on Microsoft server, network and workstation operating systems, database management systems, and application development platforms. It also integrated directly into the Microsoft Office 2000 applications that the agency was already using.

"We're using other SQL Server databases in-house, so we have some knowledge of them," notes Kootenai County's information systems director, James Martin. "Fast Enterprises' use of Microsoft technology, including SQL Server and Visual Basic, made GenTax® very attractive to us."

SQL Server is a full function database management system, with integrated development maintenance and support tools. "SQL implements a relational model of data, which is the most flexible database model available for business applications today," says Ron Csomany, a senior product specialist at Fast Enterprises.

Low costs and a quick implementation schedule were also important benefits. "Our solution didn't require the County to buy some other non-Windows server, as a lot of other COTS solutions do," explains Fast Enterprises partner, James Harrison. Ease of integration also allowed Kootenai County to roll out its new tax system "in record time," he adds.

In short, the GenTax® solution, based on Microsoft technologies, provided Kootenai County with a tax administration information technology infrastructure that was previously only available to jurisdictions that could afford the delay, cost and risk historically associated with multi-year, multi-million dollar custom application development projects.

The County and Fast Enterprises rolled out the project in three phases. In phase one, the team installed and configured the GenTax® package, running on Windows NT 4.0, to help register business return data from authorized retailers in a SQL Server 7.0 database.

In the second phase, the GenTax® system generated the permits and issued returns with names, addresses, account numbers and pay periods. This phase also incorporated bar coding to enable quick processing of filed returns. Going forward, the County will be receiving and processing merchants' sales tax returns on a monthly basis, Malzahn explains.

In the final phase, Treasury staff received completed returns with checks attached. They ran the tax returns through a barcode scanner and entered line-item data into the system. A messaging architecture then packaged and relayed the data batches to an application server that updates the database. At this point, Microsoft Transaction Server (MTS) guarantees the integrity of the County's sales tax records by ensuring that the processes running on different levels of the three-tier environment are synchronized with one another.

"If you look at where we started a year ago when the voters said do it, and where we are now, we've come a long way," says Malzahn. "The program is doing what it's supposed to do. We're not only getting money into the system — we're also better able to process this money."

For More Information

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