



Firm Saves Thousands and Gains Immediate Sales with Reactor 5

Reactor 5 Enables Critically Important Web Services Architecture for 24x7 Reliability

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Stephan Albers,
CEO, jCatalog

The Challenge

An established developer of Java-based catalog and service software, jCatalog provides their roster of large, multi-national clients with a highly-efficient means of managing the thousands of items processed through their catalog management systems—every day.

Designed to deal with a wide range of repetitive, client-specific processes, the firm's software was a perfect candidate for a robust, flexible workflow solution. In fact, jCatalog's previous version actually included some basic workflow functionality as part of its content management component.

The firm realized, however, that this functionality was far from adequate for their clients' ever-expanding needs. Hard-coded into the application, the component offered only limited configurability—and lacked such “must have” features as full audit trails to measure efficiency and track responsibilities.

In short, jCatalog now knew what they wanted in a process engine. What they didn't know was how much more their eventual solution would deliver.

Initial Exploration

The company first explored the possibility of a semi in-house solution, wherein the design and project management would be handled internally, but the coding would be outsourced. The idea was to produce a simple workflow engine with limited functionality. After considering the high cost and lengthy development schedule, however, the firm decided to investigate other options already available on the market.

jCatalog evaluated a number of commercial and OpenSource commercial process engines.

All of the initial candidates, though, were quickly rejected for one or more of the following reasons:

- Poorly constructed
- Weak support for Java
- Onerous licensing fees
- Lacking in key features

JCatalog evaluated a number of process engines, but most were quickly eliminated, Reactor 5 from Oak Grove systems emerged as the best choice. In addition to exceeding every requirement they'd had for a workflow engine, Reactor 5 offered functionality that would allow jCatalog to restructure their product in a way they had never before thought possible: around a Web Services architecture.

The Reactor 5 Solution

Given that jCatalog had applications that work on different computers and within different operating systems—not to mention, different countries—the firm knew that Web Services would be a great way to integrate, orchestrate and coordinate their activities. Reactor 5's comprehensive Web Services capabilities made the product a perfect fit.

“Reactor 5 has a great foundation that fits very well with Web Services,” said jCatalog CEO, Stephan Albers, “The product features what we call a ‘two-way interface’ with Web services. This means that Reactor 5 can either call a Web Service, or act as a Web Service itself.”

jCatalog was also impressed with Reactor 5's superior technology, which included such benefits as:

- A flexible architecture, which allows the system to be extended
- A powerful, user-friendly interface for defining processes
- System scriptability, which allowed for faster development timeframes



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- Great support for all leading application servers, including JBOSS/Tomcat, WebSphere, and WebLogic.

jCatalog was further pleased to learn that Reactor 5 offered yet another feature their customers highly desired—the ability to produce a complete audit trail of all data associated with a particular process.

And finally, they were delighted to learn Reactor 5 can also work as a stand-alone application that can control other processes, thus allowing developers to decouple applications. This meant jCatalog could restart servers without impacting the availability of Reactor 5 or other application components—an extremely attractive feature considering how many of their operations must be functional 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Results

Robust, flexible and easy to use, Reactor 5 turned out to be “almost exactly the type of process engine we would have built had we designed it ourselves,” according to Albers. In addition, jCatalog was able to deploy the software almost immediately. “In fact,” Albers adds, “we were productive within 6 weeks.

This was very important for us because it reduced our time to market drastically.”

In terms of money, jCatalog has already determined that creating their own solution in-house would have been far more expensive—even if they had restricted the functionality. With regard to licensing fees, “We believe Reactor 5’s price is very attractive when compared to the other process engines,” added Albers.

Most important of all, jCatalog realizes that adding Reactor 5 has already translated into more customer sales now—and even greater opportunity in the future.

About jCatalog

jCatalog Software AG (www.jcatalog.com) is one of Europe’s leading suppliers of electronic catalog systems. The catalog systems support marketplace, e-procurement as well as cross media publishing applications. The firm’s customers include Hubert Burda Medien, Beiersdorf AG and Siemens SPLS.

About Oak Grove Systems

Founded in 1998, Oak Grove Systems (www.oakgrovesystems.com) originally specialized in the commercial development of powerful Internet-based process coordination technology developed at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory for the NASA Space Shuttle and International Space Station programs.

Oak Grove Systems’ products include Reactor 5, one of the most powerful, flexible and compatible J2EE-based, XML-driven and Web services enabled embedded workflow process engines ever created.

Oak Grove Systems’ clients include Sybase, Plumtree Software, Cardonet, Avasta, Empolis GmbH (Bertelsmann MOHN Media Group) and Intentia International - who have chosen to add robust, flexible workflow functionality to their products.