

# DBI develops a more accessible, scalable and secure application for Brownsworth

*case study*

## **Client**

Brownsworth Incorporated, an independent office furniture service firm that helps companies optimize their office workspaces.

## **Business challenge**

Brownsworth needed a robust scheduling and employee management system to track current jobs, upcoming projects and employee schedules. A previous consulting firm recommended custom-developing the application in C#.

## **DBI Consulting solution**

DBI Consulting recommended moving to VB.net, which integrated better with many of the company's systems – and with which the IT staff was already familiar. DBI also provided a structured development methodology, project management expertise and mentoring to Brownsworth's IT staff.

## **Client benefits**

- A new solution that made more sense for the business.
- A more robust, accessible, scalable and secure application.
- A new application that's well-documented and that can be maintained easily by current IT staff.
- Insight into valuable project management and development methodologies.

When your business relies on efficiently scheduling employee resources for client projects, a time-consuming and cumbersome scheduling process can create frustration and erode profits.

Minnesota-based Brownsworth Incorporated is an independent office furniture service firm that helps companies optimize their office workspaces. Brownsworth employees are dispatched daily to client sites to install furniture systems. Over the years, as the company grew and the scheduling process became more complex, the management team recognized that they needed a robust scheduling and employee management system to track current jobs, upcoming projects and employee schedules.

"We were using Excel and Access, but we had outgrown those tools' capabilities," said Michelle Hayden, Brownsworth CFO. For example, with the old process, the Brownsworth dispatcher created daily schedules using Access, and employees accessed the schedules using a voice mail system.

"We wanted a web-based application that our employees could access remotely, so our sales reps could schedule a job in the field and employees could log on to see their schedule," said Hayden.

Brownsworth initially engaged a consulting firm that recommended custom-developing the new application in C# – the latest fad in development languages. Brownsworth wanted its internal IT resource to handle the majority of the development work and asked the consulting firm to provide project management and mentoring expertise. "We thought they were comfortable in that role, but after a few weeks, it was clear that they were not," Hayden recalled. "They went from uninterested to unreliable. In the end, they wouldn't even return our phone calls, and our developer needed help. It was clear we needed to bring someone else in."



Hayden contacted DBI Consulting in 2005, initially seeking help to continue the existing development effort in C#. However, DBI discovered that Brownsworth's IT staff was not familiar with C# and that most of the firm's existing systems were in VB. So DBI recommended moving to VB.net to lessen the learning curve and to integrate the new application more easily into Brownsworth's existing environment. "They didn't just come in and start coding blindly," Hayden said. "They assessed our situation and recommended a change that made a lot of sense for our business."

DBI also provided a structured development methodology for the project and trained Brownsworth staff on proper development methods, documentation, backup and recovery, security, quality assurance and implementation. "To DBI's credit, they were much better at understanding our business goals, defining the scope of the project and developing a structured implementation plan. They not only co-developed the system, they provided solid project management and outstanding mentoring to our IT staff."

The result was a much more accessible, scalable and secure application that can be maintained easily by current IT staff. The new application is also well-documented, so new employees can be trained and get up-to-speed quickly.

The feedback from Brownsworth's staff has been positive. "Our sales team and employees love the remote access," Hayden said. "In addition, we have a sister company in Arizona that we've added to the system, and we're now able to monitor their activity much more easily."

And compared to the first consulting firm, working with DBI was a treat, according to Hayden. "I was impressed with DBI's commitment to the project. They were flexible and willing to work with us and see the project through to the end. They proposed a solution that was much better for our business and delivered a product that will support our needs for quite some time."

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