



Red Man Pipe and Supply Company Delivers a Supply Chain Advantage

Leading supplier to oil, petrochemical, and utility companies around the world makes it easier for customers to order using an advanced ecommerce smart-client application customized for the demanding needs of the oil and manufacturing industries.

HIGHLIGHTS

Leading supplier to oil, utility, and petrochemical companies delivers a major supply chain advantage to companies around the world.

Challenges

- Run advanced ecommerce catalog application from CD without installation
- Run on any Windows (95+) machine
- Eliminate requirement for .NET framework
- Protect sensitive pricing and product data

Results

- Streamlined and more efficient supply chain – which affects both top line sales and operational costs
- Ability to run the application on any Windows OS without requiring administrative rights or installation
- Secure catalog data



Headquartered in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Red Man Pipe and Supply Company is one of the largest distributors in the US of pipe, valves, fittings, industrial mill supplies, oilfield products and tubular goods. Red Man contracts on a daily basis with more than 5,000 vendors to distribute over 50,000 products through their 70 store facilities and 9 sales offices. Red Man does business with many of the top energy companies in the world, including Exxon Mobil, Dynegy, BP, ConocoPhillips, Marathon, and Shell.

THE CHALLENGE

Red Man has become a leader in distribution through their commitment to quality and reliability by delivering service to companies who often do business in the most remote parts of the globe. In the pipe and supply business for the Oil Field and Industrial market, getting the exact fitting ordered easily and quickly requires systems adapted to the unique supply chain needs of these companies. To that end, Red Man maintains customized order processing systems, and has created

an ecommerce catalog application. The catalog is data driven, providing an offline shopping cart, and maintains a remote database of queued orders. The orders can later be placed seamlessly to the Red Man back end systems over any speed line via the Internet, automated fax system, or satellite modem VPN. Though the ecommerce catalog application provides a sophisticated state-of-the-art purchasing system, the computers in the field and plants often are outdated and do not allow new software to be installed or existing software to be updated. They could be almost any Windows OS and typically run offline without easy access to the Internet.

RED MAN REQUIREMENTS

The key business drivers for the ecommerce catalog application were the values that made Red Man successful: Quality and Reliability. At first the Red Man Information Systems (IS) department attempted to develop the application in Java, but that GUI was too cumbersome and the range of computers it could be deployed to was limited because of installation and administra-

tor privilege requirements. The decision was made to go with Microsoft .NET, which provided clear development and GUI advantages. However, many of the older computers in use by their customers would not have the .NET

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Jay Selle
Red Man Pipe and Supply

framework installed. Moreover, the customer computers in the field had limited administrator access, so the application couldn’t be installed and had to run from a CD. For Jay Selle, Web Services Engineer, not meeting these requirements was a non-starter for the project. “Our customers needed a way to order that met the rigors of the environment they were operating in. They needed ease of use on any computer that allowed them to work offline, and then connect to the Internet or fax back an order, over sometimes spotty or expensive lines. They needed to be able to place their order quickly,

knowing that their pricing and delivery instructions were accurate. This type of custom application is what enables Red Man to provide supply chain advantages to our customers.”

THE SOLUTION

Red Man chose Thinstall to meet their challenging deployment requirements. The ecommerce catalog application had been developed and within a matter of hours from when Selle’s team downloaded and tried Thinstall, their application was packaged into a single obfuscated EXE, with all of the required .NET framework components.

For Selle, “Thinstall proved itself immediately by being easy to use and demonstrating results so quickly.”

The application is already in use at a majority of Red Man’s existing, demanding customers around the globe. It is a differentiating element of the service that Red Man built a reputation providing.

THE RESULTS

Along with the obvious IS benefits, comments Selle, “is the ability for Red Man to protect and secure our sensitive catalog and pricing data. Thinstall packages the application and the data so we don’t have to worry. We can’t begin to estimate the increase in sales that the application has enabled for us because of the ease of use it allows us to offer to our customers.”

Red Man saw immediate results in the ability to give its customers flexibility, which directly affects their top line sales:

- **Ease of ordering.** The ability to run from any Windows OS, 95 and above, which enables a more efficient and streamlined supply chain.
- **No installation and no footprint.** Thinstall runs the application in its virtual machine—a virtual filesystem and registry—that eliminates the need to modify the host OS.
- **Run from a CD.** The application can be run from a CD without installation.
- **No administrator rights required.** Even for locked down computers, where the user has no administrative rights, the application can be run without conflicts.
- **Secure catalog data.** Red Man’s catalog of products and pricing contains highly sensitive, database driven information, which provides a competitive advantage in how it provides excellent customer service to its customers. Thinstall packages everything needed into a single EXE and encrypts sensitive data for protection from unauthorized user access.

THE FUTURE

Because of the success at customer sites, Red Man sees the ecommerce catalog application gaining even wider distribution. Plans are to distribute the application to larger audiences through its many store locations and trade-shows. Comments Selle, “Thinstall’s greatest value is that it lets us deploy a direct, customer facing application that enables an easy, fast, and secure way of doing business with Red Man. This type of innovation and attention to customer service delivers an increase to our top line sales as well as reduces bottom line costs for both Red Man and our customers.”



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