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 300 Spectrum Center Drive
 Suite 400, Irvine, CA 92618



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Business Intelligence



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Spotlight on Client Success

CLIENT PROFILE

Name:

Schneider Electric, Inc.

Description:

Schneider Electric delivers efficient solutions across the global energy chain, enabling people to experience and transform efficiency together at home, in enterprise, across the grid, in towns and cities, and in energy-poor countries. Integrated and open, their solutions improve financial performance while conserving resources, for a more sustainable world.

Industry:

Electrical Equipment

Need:

Jump start user productivity with comprehensive, application-focused BIRT training.

Results:

A training course focused on the use of BIRT within Schneider's application framework.

"Our clients are delighted to have the skills and knowledge to be able to create their own reports and gain insight about their data centers through the use of our products."

-Constantino Casado
 Director, Schneider Electric

BACKGROUND

Schneider Electric provides a comprehensive Data Center Infrastructure Management (DCIM) suite, StruxureWare for Data Centers, which enables optimal management of the data center across multiple domains. One of the applications within the suite, Data Center Operation (DCO), utilizes the Eclipse Business Intelligence and Reporting Tools (BIRT) to perform analysis of the data collected and managed by DCO. As the DCIM application is built using the Eclipse platform it was a natural choice to embed BIRT as the report engine.

Schneider Electric enables clients to customize 25 standard report designs, as well as create new types of analysis through Data Center Operation: Insight (DCO Insight), a customized version of the BIRT Report Designer.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

DCO is used by operators and administrators that are responsible for data center operations. As domain experts within the data center, they are keenly aware of the metrics and key performance indicators that are required to manage their data centers. As technology experts, their expectation is that they should be able to perform analysis without the aid of IT development teams.

Schneider Electric found that DCO Insight was difficult to get started with, as it differed greatly from the other parts of the application, and presented challenges to many StruxureWare clients when modifying existing or creating new reports.

Analysis and discussion with clients revealed three main issues.

- 1) DCO Insight was not intuitive to data center operations staff
- 2) Standard reports used a variety of advanced techniques
- 3) The DCO data model was relatively complex for common users

Working one-on-one with some of its clients, Schneider Electric determined that these barriers could be mitigated through formal DCO Insight training.

While there are a variety of publicly available BIRT training courses, none of them are focused on DCO Insight, and the DCO database structure in particular. Schneider Electric therefore decided to design a BIRT course focused on the features used within DCO Insight, coupled with knowledge on how to access data from the DCO export database structure.

Schneider Electric provides comprehensive training on all aspects of its products but the training development team had limited experience working with BIRT. Recognizing that it would provide faster results to adapt existing BIRT training materials rather than start from scratch, Schneider Electric chose to partner with Innovent Solutions to create and deliver customized BIRT training for DCO Insight.

Innovent Solutions is a founding member of the BIRT project team and provides consulting, training and support to a variety of clients using BIRT in a variety of applications. Innovent delivers BIRT training through a modular training program that covers all of the core BIRT functions. Innovent has developed custom BIRT training for a variety of applications including IBM Maximo™, SAP SuccessFactors™, Blackboard™, and other custom applications.

SOLUTIONS

Schneider Electric's goal was to create a five-day DCO Insight course covering BIRT fundamentals and topics specific to the DCO database structure. Innovent, working with Schneider Electric, identified the following five DCO Insight specific topics:

- 1) Understand unique DCO Insight features and development practices
- 2) Customize standard out-of-the-box analysis delivered with DCO Insight
- 3) Create new DCO Insight analysis and deploy to the DCO server
- 4) Understand effective DCO data model techniques used in analysis
- 5) Explore custom report solutions created by DCO Services team

Innovent's standard training materials covered the fundamental knowledge required to utilize the basic DCO Insight functionality. Using a modular structure, Innovent's training materials provide comprehensive coverage on the use of BIRT from simple to advanced, and could be easily customized and re-branded for use by Schneider Electric.

Next, Innovent needed to make a seamless transition from their standard materials to the specific materials created for Schneider Electric's DCO Insight. Creating new modules for each of Schneider Electric's objectives allowed for a natural progression from Innovent's standard material to the DCO Insight specific content.

Innovent uses the Tell, Show, Do, Apply methodology in our course instruction. Our instructors first Tell their students about a topic using slides and images to help illustrate the problem. They then Show using meaningful demonstrations that focus on the topic and various techniques within the application. The students practice the skills associated with the topic while they Do a hands on exercise using easy to follow instructions. Students are given frequent opportunities to Apply the skills they have learned as they progress through the course.

Content creation for the new materials included exploring the customization and development practices used when analyzing DCO data, such as server upload and download. Innovent used this as an opportunity for students to apply their knowledge of generic BIRT report development while using DCO techniques and tools. Next, Innovent used the custom DCO Insight features to download standard reports and to customize them.

The knowledge gained from the first two custom training modules was then used to build a new basic DCO analysis section, with a simple exploration of the DCO data model. Once Innovent had introduced the DCO data model, it was analyzed further, exploring the key relationships for analysis builders.

Finally, students were presented with a set of high-level business challenges that are common within a production data center, and asked to solve the problems through the creation of a DCO analysis. Rather than provide step-by-step instructions, students were given high-level hints that forced them to apply their newly acquired skills.

THE RESULTS

Innovent Solutions created a custom, five-day training course on how to customize and create content using DCO Insight. The course provided instruction on basic BIRT usage as well as techniques specific to Schneider Electric's DCO implementation of BIRT.

Innovent delivered the course to a team of Schneider Electric employees, including staff from product development, technical support, services, sales, and training. Presenting to this diverse range of Schneider Electric employees allowed Innovent to help Schneider Electric employees learn about BIRT as well as increase Innovent's understanding of DCO Insight in preparation for client presentation. Feedback from the Schneider Electric team allowed Innovent to further improve the course so that clients would get the most out of their learning experience.

Innovent delivered the course to ten employees for a key Schneider Electric customer that was actively working to build and deploy DCO analysis to their data center system. A number of the participants were in the early phases of learning to use DCO Insight, while the balance had plans to use DCO Insight in the near future. The feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive.

"I really enjoyed the class and found the content useful. I appreciate Innovent's ability to deliver instruction and show demonstrations and without sticking to PowerPoint slides."



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300 Spectrum Center Drive Suite 400
Irvine, CA 92618

Phone: 949.754.2940
Fax: 562.262.2835
Email: info@innosolutions.com

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Innovent Solutions provides consulting, training and support services and solutions for Search, Business Intelligence and eCommerce technologies. We build systems that enable our clients to:

- Find the information they want and need
- Understand the context and meaning of information
- Trust the information to be accurate and timely

Our focus on customer goals and objectives combined with deep technical depth and experience, allow us to build successful, high visibility solutions that deliver immediate value to our clients.

Innovent Solutions is a privately held company headquartered in Irvine, California with offices in Minneapolis.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Innovent Solutions is a founding member of the Eclipse Business Intelligence and Reporting Tools (BIRT) project. Since the project inception in 2004, Innovent has been active part of the BIRT leadership, development team and community. We provide consulting, support and training services to organizations that use BIRT. Our services include:

- Requirements Scoping and Analysis
- Best Practice Report Development
- Architecture, Design & Planning
- Team development using reusable libraries and templates
- Customization and Extension of BIRT
- Subscription-based support
- Comprehensive Training