

San Francisco, California

Intranet Development Case Study

Axean Pacific, Inc.

Axean Pacific, Inc. (API) provides technology consulting services focused on distributed computing, web application development, project management and compliance, business intelligence, and business process outsourcing. As a part of this business, API offers its Web Application Development Service which enables companies to use web browsers - such as Netscape and Internet Explorer - to access enterprise and workgroup information stored on databases.

In one of these projects, API has been working with a Fortune 500 company in the Bay Area to develop intranet applications to meet their business needs. The first application API built for this client was an operations change control and problem management tool developed using database and intranet technology. The use of intranet technology to access key information was chosen because it:

- Leverages a relatively standard client, the Web browser.
- Avoids the deployment of full-featured licensed software for management and client access, thereby reducing the number of supported front-end applications.
- Allows users to generate reports instead of technical support staff resulting in savings and improved service.
- Allows technical support staff to focus on production installs rather than multiple application support.
- Supports direction of automated operations with immediate access to relevant operations change and problem management information.
- Expands the usage and availability of change control and problem management information to internal clients.

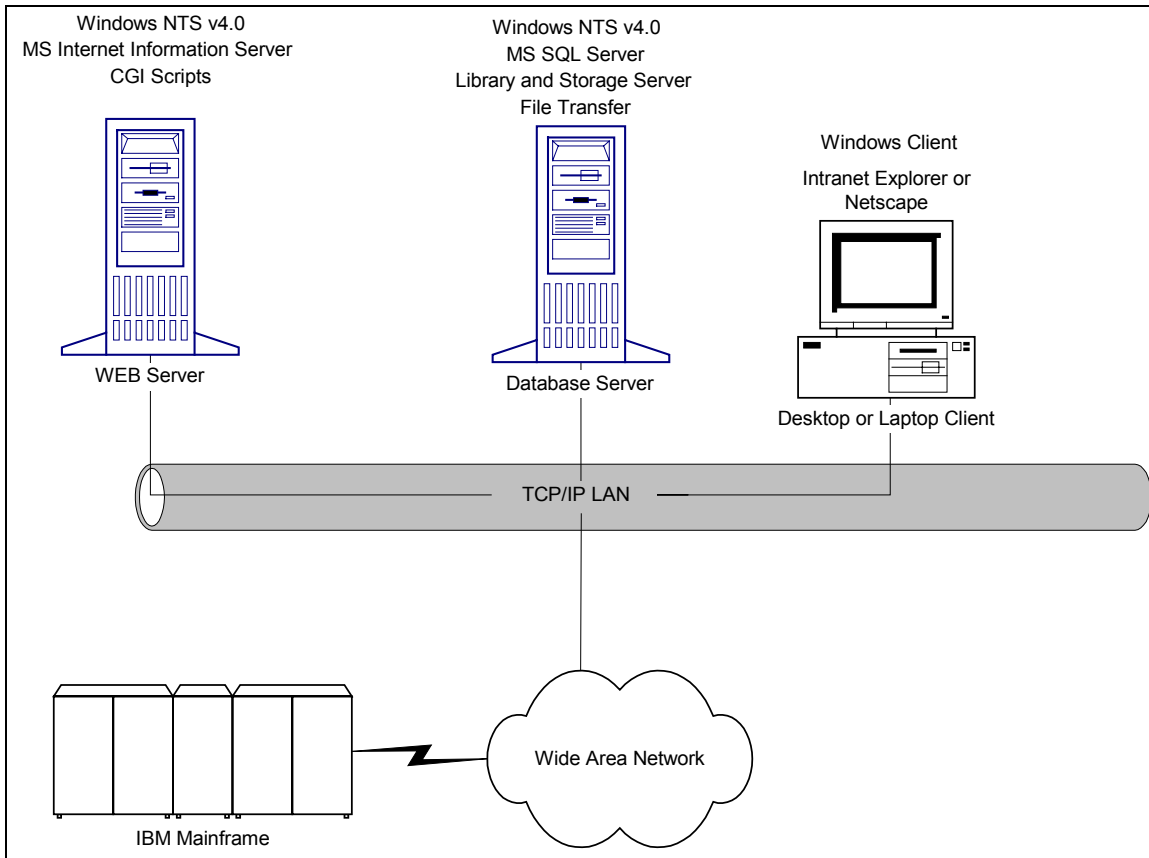
The business goal of the application was to provide access to change and problem management - currently maintained in three separate sources - using one interface. To achieve this goal, the application collects data from two mainframe sources on a bi-hourly basis and from one network server on a daily basis. The data is then parsed to be loaded into one common database running Microsoft SQL Server. Access to the data is then provided through a browser connected to a Microsoft IIS server. Using the built in CGI engine in IIS and C++ tools, data is pulled from the SQL Server database to be presented into the client's browser application.

This application began as a proof-of-concept, and has now been expanded to provide day-to-day operational support to a larger audience, with more and more clients seeing the value of "database reachthrough" for their business. Prior to the release of this application, users had to consult multiple sources or rely on a mainframe programmer to create reports and pull up key information. Now they access the same data more efficiently and more timely using a standard browser such as Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator.

In addition to the change and problem management tool, our latest project has been an asset reporting application used by management to analyze asset financials and lease renewals. With this tool, management, for the first time, has quick and easy access to up-to-date asset financials, and no longer has to rely on a key mainframe user or programmer to pull up relevant information. By pulling asset information daily into a SQL Server database and by using web technology, our customers are now able to pull up reports they need using their browser by selecting from a standard set of reports or by generating a simple query-by-example search. The best part is that they now can have the reports they need literally in seconds.

Both tools have, in a very short time frame, become invaluable to our customers, and have changed the way they do business and access data.

An overview of the architecture used in both projects appears in the diagram below:



To support these applications, our customer has two Compaq Proliant servers: a web server running IIS, and a database server running Microsoft SQL Server. Both servers are NT machines running NTS version 4.0. Additional servers are planned for the future to accommodate other database back-ends including Oracle and Informix. The total target user group for these applications could add up to 1200 users. In addition, these applications are accessible through a company-wide intranet that spans 11 states and 20,000 desktop clients.

In terms of support and maintenance, both applications are complete with autoarchiving, transaction log management, and error trapping for file transfer routines. All file transfer and database scrubbing routines have been automated using Perl scripts and/or standard SQL. Backups are generated on a regular basis using BackupExec.

If you would like more information on these applications, or are interested in learning more about API's Web Application Development Service, please contact Victor Tayao (victor.tayao@axeanpacific.com) or visit our website at www.axeanpacific.com.