



Borland delivers Web Services and cross-platform solutions for Colliers International

“Our consultants used Borland Delphi 6, and subsequently Borland Kylix 2, to transform a time-consuming client/server process into an infinitely faster Web Service with the added benefit of support for wireless devices. The result is a state-of-the-art system for enabling our real estate agents to access property listing data at their desktops, or even via their handheld devices, to review property data while sitting in the car with a client.”

—Jonathan Green, CIO

Colliers International Partnership

Colliers International

Colliers International is the largest commercial real estate organization in the world, with operations in 51 countries and real estate agents in 300 U.S. offices.

Colliers International Partnership (Colliers), a member/owner firm of Colliers International, sought to speed the online searching and retrieval of property data and to enhance the production of custom reports for internal customers and clients. Through its consulting firm, Kazoo Software Inc., Colliers used the Borland® Delphi™ development environment to transform the firm’s intranet system to incorporate new COM-based solutions and leverage Web Services; this cut data-search time from 14 to 1.75 seconds and also enabled the service to support wireless devices.

As a result, brokers at Colliers are extremely pleased with increased productivity and flexibility the new solution affords them. Thus, the company continues to work with Kazoo and to utilize Borland solutions—including a new Borland Kylix™ Web Services solution to enable the company to leverage applications on a cost-effective Linux® server.

Situation

Colliers needed a better process for commercial real estate brokers to access, compile, and print mission-critical reports of property data. Colliers brokers every day prepare multiple reports to share information with their clients; legacy systems caused delays in data searching and report generation.

The new solution had to reduce the time required to compile and print reports but continue to use the existing platform and database; it also had to extend that information to portable devices used by brokers offsite.

Familiar with Borland technologies and software solutions, Kazoo chose for Colliers the Delphi 6 development environment, as this leading technology would enable developers to easily and quickly build the application with the required improvements and functionality.

Results

Kazoo used Delphi to re-architect the existing configuration with a COM-based, SOAP-enabled Web Service that can be accessed by many platforms—even a broker’s mobile device.

Requiring only 1.75 seconds to gather and deliver detailed search results, the advanced Delphi application developed by Kazoo was more than 20 times faster than the next fastest solution.

Colliers brokers have been thrilled with the flexibility and productivity of the Delphi solution, and Colliers has continued partnering with Kazoo to develop additional solutions based on Borland technologies.

A new version of the Delphi application—based on Kylix 2 and written in just two hours—enables Colliers to leverage the benefits of the Linux platform in its Web farm; this application is the foundation for a public version of the application, still under development.

Delphi™



The Colliers Situation

As one of the world's leading real estate organizations, Colliers is committed to equipping its brokers with advanced technologies that boost productivity and improve convenience for their clients.

Real estate brokers in the branch offices of Colliers rely on the corporate intranet for daily access to property listing data. When clients indicate their preferences for buying or leasing property in a given location, the brokers use a search engine to retrieve appropriate listings and then print a detailed report to assist when showing the properties. Brokers prepare multiple sets of listings reports every day.

In the application Colliers had been using, a broker would submit a request through a Web browser, then wait while the Web server queried a SQL server and then output the data to a report file that had to be ported to Adobe® Acrobat® Reader for the broker to retrieve and print. For brokers, the process was intolerably slow—especially since system performance suffered when multiple brokers requested reports at the same time.

Colliers wanted the Kazoo development team to devise an immediate solution that would speed the process and also support wireless devices in a more platform-independent model.

Colliers considered several proposed solutions for its data searching, report generation, and printing dilemma. After an initial assisted endeavor to take the data to the company's intranet, Colliers needed a trustworthy, professional, and technically agnostic partner that could bring new expertise to a primarily Microsoft environment. They chose the San Jose, California-based Kazoo Software Inc. for its reputation of delivering timely, effective, and constructive business solutions for fledgling and established enterprises.

The Borland Solution

Having applied Borland technologies to other projects, Kazoo developers recommended a solution based on Delphi to provide an organizationwide system that would provide the central repository for a vast cache of property data and allow access for Colliers' many internal users.

Developers used Delphi 6 to transform the data-assembly and retrieval process into a Web Services- and COM-based server. The DataSnap™ framework of Delphi sped the SQL query-return process, and the queuing and caching reports eliminated the system slowdowns that plagued users of the previous Colliers intranet. Thanks to the Delphi application, property searching, report generation, and printing times dropped from minutes to seconds. Further, developers took advantage of the Web Services support provided by the Delphi environment, creating a SOAP/XML layer around the application that would support the sharing of information with users of portable devices.

Following the seamless implementation the Kazoo team was able to complete on time and on budget, brokers have enjoyed tremendous timesaving benefits thanks to the Delphi application. To further enhance the application, developers are implementing additional security and cost benefits by availing the application to the Linux platform: using the Borland CLX™ (Component Library for Cross-platform development) framework in Delphi, developers in less than two hours recompiled the application in Kylix 2, creating a proof-of-concept that Colliers needed to move forward in considering a Linux solution.

The resulting Kylix application—currently being tested for deployment—provides the speed and flexibility of the existing Delphi application while allowing Colliers to leverage the benefits of Linux and Web Services. The Kylix solution, running on a secure and reliable Linux server, has been engineered to enable real estate brokers and their clients to access property-listings data quickly and easily—from Web browsers and mobile devices.

With the Delphi and Kylix solutions, Colliers supports its internal team with a state-of-the-art application designed for speed, flexibility, and performance.

▶ Technology

Application	Property management application
Development environments	Borland Delphi, Borland Kylix
Other tools evaluated	Microsoft® Visual Basic®
Database server	Microsoft SQL Server™
Hardware platform	Compaq® Proliant® with Intel® Pentium® 3
Team size	Four developers
Development time	Three months (ongoing)

Borland®

100 Enterprise Way
Scotts Valley, California 95066-3249
www.borland.com | 831-431-1000



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