Ai2: Developing Game-Changing Sales Force Automation Solutions

Executive Overview

Company

Vision

Why SAP

Implementation

Solution

Benefits

Company
Ai2 Inc.

Industry
High tech—software provider

Products and Services
Enterprise mobility solutions to help customers increase sales, productivity, and profitability

Website
www.ai2.com

SAP® Solutions
SAP® Sybase® SQL Anywhere® suite

Anticipating customer demand for a sales force automation and remote order entry app that would run on the Apple iPad, Ai2 Inc. developed ProSel. More than ordering software, ProSel is a flexible extension of customers' existing enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions, providing sales teams with **online and offline access to all the data and functionality they need** to perform their daily tasks. To support ProSel, Ai2 selected the SAP® Sybase® SQL Anywhere® database management suite.

Helping distributors grow sales and profitability

Founded in 1986 and headquartered in Chicago, Ai2 develops enterprise mobility solutions that help distributors and other businesses increase sales, productivity, and profitability. Ai2's goal is to make the sales and order entry process fast and easy for field sales representatives as well as for its clients' retail customers who are responsible for the ordering process.

Ai2 sales force automation solutions focus on streamlining the order-taking process in the field. They enable sales reps to quickly access line items, improve ordering flexibility by providing a variety of solutions for handheld Microsoft Windows computers, tablet computers, or notebooks. And deliver mission-critical business information to sales reps and customers at the point of sale, when and where it is needed most. They also improve communications by guaranteeing the validity of transmitted order data, and eliminating order entry errors and other time-consuming business problems.

Ai2 offers wireless order entry solutions for any company with a mobile field sales force taking orders for future delivery. Clients include companies in industries as diverse as food service, convenience stores, grocery, wine and beverage, hardware, paper, restaurant supply, jewelry, and medical supply. Ai2 works with its distributor clients to provide customized solutions that permit them to simplify operations and become more profitable.

75,000
End-users for all Ai2 solutions

Developing industry-leading mobile solutions

Ai2 is dedicated to delivering innovative, reliable, and well-supported mobile order entry software solutions to help its clients improve their business efficiency and profitability. It promises its clients that when they use Ai2 solutions, they will spend less time entering orders and more time proactively managing other important aspects of their businesses.

When Ai2 developed ProSel for use on the iPad, it knew it needed reliable database technology that would enable it to keep its promise to its clients. "SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere has made it possible for us to continue to offer our clients industry-leading sales force automation and mobility solutions," says Max Stewart, director of marketing at Ai2. "The iPad is a cost-effective platform compared to laptops and our clients' mobile workers love them."

"The ProSel app supported by SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere is proving to be so reliable, user-friendly, and productivity-enhancing that we've heard of salespeople threatening to quit if their companies take away their iPad-based ProSel applications."

Max Stewart, Director of Marketing, Ai2 Inc.
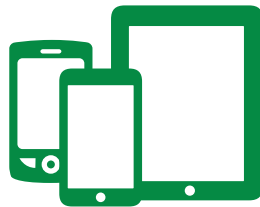
Providing untethered access to host databases

Ai2 historically had been a Microsoft shop. However, with the release of the iPad and the enthusiastic reception it received in workplaces, Ai2 realized that the iPad had the potential to be a game changer as a mobile applications platform. For the iPad to work for Ai2 and its clients, it needed to be able to provide fast, often untethered access to the host database. Therefore, it needed a local database and data movement solution that could be embedded in Ai2's sales force automation solution, could integrate with any ERP system, and could scale to support various sizes of end-user populations. The company also wanted a mobile data management solution that would support additional devices, including Android-based devices, down the road.

Ai2 conducted a thorough evaluation of potential mobile data management solutions for the iPad solution it envisioned. The result of that evaluation was the selection of SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere. Key to that selection was the fact that the SAP solution could work offline when a connection to the host database was not immediately available and could then synchronize with the back-end database when connectivity became available. The high performance level of SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere, and its ability to scale to support a handful of end-users or hundreds or more end-users, were also very important.

ProSel, the iPad application that Ai2 developed using SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere, has been heartily embraced by Ai2's clients.

Expeditious, configurable, and scalable

As a software development firm that historically developed its solutions on the Windows platform, there was a bit of a learning curve for Ai2 in developing an iOS solution. However, this was minimal and Ai2 was able to develop the ProSel client software expeditiously.

ProSel employs SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere. SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere includes a small-footprint data management solution for mobile devices, which Ai2 employs on the iPad. The SAP software also comes with synchronization technology (MobiLink™) that enables integration and data movement between leading enterprise systems. These capabilities allow customers to configure end-user implementations to ensure that salespeople have access only to the data and functions they need for their jobs.

20,000-30,000

Typical number of products managed by the ProSel application

Enabling users to work online or offline

The ProSel sales force automation and remote order entry app for the iPad was developed to provide Ai2 customers with a robust, scalable, reliable, and convenient mobility solution to enable them to increase sales and improve profitability. ProSel, supported by SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere, enables sales representatives to create and submit sales orders, make powerful presentations, browse digital catalogs, and organize multimedia products such as sales flyers and promotional videos.

ProSel is ideal for any company that has a sales force or customers placing orders on a regular basis. It provides users with fast order entry, communication with colleagues in central offices, presentation resources, image and video display, rapid catalog search, and more. Most important, thanks to the data synchronization technology in SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere, ProSel enables users to work online or offline—an invaluable functionality for users working in the field.

The SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere database scales to support large user populations and can maintain accurate, instantly available information on tens of thousands of individual items. ProSel interfaces with whatever ERP software system customers already have. SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere also provides enterprise-class security through database file and communications encryption.

Increased productivity, lower costs, better customer service

Ai2's recognition that the iPad could be a game changer in the sales force automation field has proven to be accurate, with more of its customers deploying ProSel or expressing interest in a tablet-based solution. Companies that have deployed the ProSel application with the embedded SAP Sybase SQL Anywhere report numerous benefits:

• Reduced costs due to the lower cost of iPads compared to laptops and older mobile devices, as well as the elimination of paper order forms, price sheets, and product sheets
• More efficient and effective sales calls
• Improved order accuracy
• Ability to conduct business regardless of connectivity to back-office systems
• Rapid synchronization with centralized systems, ensuring that salespeople have the most accurate customer, order history, product inventory, and pricing information
• Increased convenience of working from iPads instead of laptops or with paper forms and product information
• Virtually zero IT maintenance
• Enterprise-class security

Sandy Harris, IT manager, at City Wholesale Grocery company, one of Ai2's customers, sums up the benefits of using ProSel: "We pride ourselves on the customer service we deliver. ProSel running on the iPad empowers our salespeople to serve our customers even better. Our salespeople love the application. It is making them more productive while eliminating the need for them to lug laptops and stacks of paper with them everywhere they go. From an IT perspective, our sales reps require virtually no tech support. ProSel just works."