



Houston Texans Draft Catapult to Create Custom Scouting Application



The Houston Texans new general manager needed to improve the team's ability to assess and rank athletes. Scouting and selecting the right players is key to a team's success, making it critical to update the organization's college and professional player scouting application to meeting their changing reporting and analysis needs.

The existing scouting application presented challenges with the recording, submission and analysis of scouting data for a variety of reasons. The data was stored across multiple Microsoft Access and SQL Server databases which required the Texans' database administrator to move information between systems. It also required the users to know which database to search in order to locate information. In addition, the application's architectural limitations precluded the delivery of information in the format the general manager required.

The Texans determined that the solution was a new custom application, based on Microsoft .NET. but, with just one full-time programmer on staff, it was impossible for the Texans to create in time for football season, less than a month from project start.

Requirements in hand, the Texans approached Catapult for application development expertise. The combination of Catapult's Microsoft knowledge and its experience on other Texans projects made Catapult a perfect fit.

How Catapult Systems Helped

The Texans needed their new scouting application in time for football season, just a month away, so their scouts could enter and submit reports. In order to meet this very aggressive schedule, the Texans supplied detailed requirements.

Catapult developed a detailed project plan designed to deliver the requested functionality in three phased releases.

"We considered feature-by-feature what was in the system, almost on a daily basis, because of the hard deadline and unique functional requirements. We couldn't compromise quality to meet the schedule," said Ken Keating, director of business development, Catapult Systems.

The new application changes the way player data is evaluated and the process that the scouts use to capture and transmit their reports. Scouts now enter evaluations, measurables, comments and athlete photos into a central server through a browser-based application over a secure VPN connection.

The application uses Web-based ASP.NET with a SQL Server backend and SSI applications to connect to external data. It also uses SQL reporting services and Adobe Acrobat Export to lock data presentation to meet stringent report printing requirements.

The application is used by more than 20 staff, most of whom travel to locations where availability of high-speed Internet connectivity is not a given. Therefore, Catapult developed the new solution to be easy to access remotely, leveraging ASP.NET AJAX to improve response

Executive Summary

Solutions

- Microsoft .NET Application Development
- Microsoft SQL Server

Client Profile

Houston NFL Holdings owns and operates the Houston Texans professional football team, which entered the National Football League as an expansion team in 2002. Houston businessman Bob McNair leads the ownership group.
www.houstontexans.com

Business Challenge

The Texans' scouting application, used to evaluate college and professional football talent, needed a major overhaul. The new general manager required increased visibility into reliable data. The greatest challenge was developing the new system in time for the beginning of football season, less than a month away.

How Catapult Helped

Catapult created a phased implementation plan to meet the timeline. Catapult then developed a custom application based on Microsoft .NET, which allows the Texans' scouts to remotely submit, update and access all prospect information for immediate access and analysis by the front office and coaching staff.

Results

- Eliminated data loss from remote systems
- Reduced multiple databases to one
- Enhanced reporting for decision making
- Decreased training requirements
- Decreased strain on IT resources

"The Texans are in the entertainment business. We want to provide the best game day experience possible for our fans. This tool will help the Texans win a future Super Bowl by making sure we have the correct players on the field, enhancing our fans' game day experience."

- Nick Ignatiev, IT Director, Houston Texans

time, and used Web compression to reduce data transfer times so that users could access feature-rich pages and submit large amounts of data, even in very low bandwidth situations. In addition, to support a wide range of user skill sets, Catapult created a consistent, easy to use user interface.

The first functional phase release was completed in just three weeks, in time for the college football season. It gave scouts basic report creation and submission capabilities and provided connectivity to the college prospect database. A second release added connectivity to NFL data, and loaded information from the old system in time for the professional football pre-season. A final phase increased the richness of features, with drag and drop depth charts, reporting, player photos and more, and improved upon previous features like compression ratios.

Since the rollout, the Texans' IT team has found the application to be easily supported and extensible, and has been able to easily add enhancements using their in-house resources.

Results

- Browser-based report submission and centralized application reduced errors and eliminated data loss
- Multiple databases were reduced to one, improving data flow and dramatically reducing maintenance demands
- Management and Scouts have real-time access to all player information on a central server, for smarter decision making
- The application was designed, developed and implemented on budget and on time - a year and a half faster than a single developer could deliver
- Time to value was short, with minimal training required for general manager and scouts to use the new application

"Catapult's ability to scale-up the team to meet our aggressive schedule and still keep everyone on the same page, and their dedication to the project was crucial. The team worked many long hours to meet the release deadlines."
- Jeff Schmitz, IT Manager, Houston Texans

How Can We Help You?

Let us know at 800.528.6248 or info@CatapultSystems.com

