

# Customer Profile

**Information Builders enables agile information solutions with the WebFOCUS business intelligence (BI) platform and integration technologies from iWay Software.**

## NASA

### Snapshot

#### Organization

The Launch Vehicle Processing Directorate at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida manages the preparation and refurbishment of NASA's space shuttles and future reusable launch vehicles.

#### Challenge

Create BI applications to manage employee travel, budgets, IT expenditures, and other core business activities.

#### Strategy

Automate reporting, information delivery, data entry, and workflow-approval processes with a cohesive set of tools for reporting and business intelligence.

#### Results

A standard, repeatable set of reporting processes that feature portable analytics, consistent data-entry procedures, and integration with the Microsoft SharePoint portal environment.

#### Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS (including Active Reports, Mobile Favorites, and Open Portal Services), iWay Service Manager, and Professional Services.



## NASA Vehicle Processing Directorate Uses WebFOCUS for Critical Business Projects

### New Reporting Initiatives Complement Ten Years of Business Intelligence Investments

NASA's information systems are constantly evolving – and that's one reason Information Builders has been such a reliable technology partner. For several years, the Launch Vehicle Processing Directorate at NASA's Kennedy Space Center depended on Information Builders WebFOCUS business intelligence (BI) platform to monitor contractor performance and prepare the Space Shuttle orbiters for launch. Today, this NASA directorate is using Information Builders' latest BI capabilities to accomplish a variety of operational and administrative reporting tasks.

"As our requirements have grown over the years, WebFOCUS has grown at the same rate or quicker," says Ron Phelps, a project manager in the Launch Vehicle Processing Directorate. "Time and time again, the software has evolved to provide the capabilities we need."

**"[Since] WebFOCUS is browser-based, we don't have to spend much time learning how to use new BI applications."**

In an era of tough cost controls, NASA must develop and deploy reports with minimal resources. For the Launch Vehicle Processing Directorate, WebFOCUS is one of the answers. Its flexibility as a data publishing and reporting system enables employees and contractors to access any type of data and deliver reports through standard Web browsers. This enables people throughout the organization to create and deploy richly formatted reports. WebFOCUS also supplies all the advanced Web-based features people need to use reports effectively, such as integrated proactive hyperlink drill-downs – in all supported output formats – to any other report, program, or location(s) without any additional client or viewer.

"WebFOCUS enables our engineers to use their time more effectively," Phelps says. "We can jump right into collecting and analyzing information rather than spinning our wheels merely looking for information. We can request detailed, parameterized reports. And because WebFOCUS is browser-based, we don't have to spend much time learning how to use new BI applications."

### **Technology That Grows With the Program**

Phelps speaks with confidence, reflecting his 39-year tenure at the space agency. For many years the NASA Launch Vehicle Processing Directorate relied on WebFOCUS as one of the applications in its Insight system. Insight was key to NASA's vision for a total knowledge management system, in which contractors and engineers share information across systems, platforms, and organizational barriers. "Knowledge management involves getting the right information to the right people at the right time, which helps people create knowledge," explains Phelps. "Then they can share and act upon information in ways that will measurably improve the performance of NASA and its partners."

Based on this premise, the Launch Vehicle Processing Directorate also created electronic log and surveillance systems to identify and track adherence to the requirements associated with processing vehicles. NASA engineers also developed a WebFOCUS application that tracks all of their IT requirements. "If people need to purchase hardware, software, or other IT equipment, this application allows them to identify recommended products and costs, then obtains approvals and authorizations," says Phelps.

Meanwhile, they created a WebFOCUS-based travel expense system that uses e-mail-based workflow procedures to gather information and route approvals, and a budget application that helps the directorate control costs. According to Phelps, budget managers formerly used spreadsheets to create and track budgets, which got confusing when people passed data back and forth. Now they use WebFOCUS to input data in a consistent way. "These processes all used to be manual," he explains. "Now, they generate data automatically, and they use iWay adapters to interact with PeopleSoft, Maximo, and other business applications."

iWay Software's data integration solutions simplify access to many types of data, enabling the directorate to address the information needs of many different users, including extract, transform, and load (ETL), enterprise information integration (EII) initiatives, and Web services deployments.

### **Enhanced Search, Retrieval, and Wireless BI Capabilities**

The innovation continues. NASA plans to explore the possibility of using WebFOCUS Magnify to enhance searches within its massive body of requirements documents. Phelps says Magnify's

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**“WebFOCUS allows us to develop applications and get user buy-in very quickly.”**

search, reporting, and integration technology could enable his team to tap into previously inaccessible documents by creating Google-style results from data sources across the enterprise. “By linking unstructured and structured data, we would be able to search on all sorts of enterprise information, enabling quicker decisions,” he notes. “We think Magnify could help us in our search criteria, because we have a lot of unstructured documents. For example, it could let us search on keywords and set filters to find particular reports.”

The Launch Vehicle Processing Directorate also plans to use WebFOCUS Active Reports to deliver analytic capabilities to engineers while disconnected from the network. Phelps says this approach is very economical because it allows the directorate to supply a few key data points, then lets users drill down to the details as necessary. “Instead of formatting a PDF or Excel report, we can just send one key piece of information,” he explains. “We don’t have to display all the data on the screen at one time, which will allow us to send requests to mini browsers on PDAs and cell phones.”

This application will use WebFOCUS Active Reports and WebFOCUS Mobile Favorites to deliver information. WebFOCUS Active Reports combines an analytic engine with selected data in a lightweight HTML page. Because all the interactions are performed within the browser, no application software needs to be installed on the client – a real advantage when those clients are cell phones or PDAs. WebFOCUS Mobile Favorites makes it easy for users to determine which content they would like to receive on their devices. The mobile technology uses the existing directory and security functions within Microsoft Outlook to authenticate users.

Finally, as the Launch Vehicle Processing Directorate revamps its user environment, it is integrating its WebFOCUS applications with a Microsoft SharePoint portal environment. Using WebFOCUS Open Portal Services, Phelps and his team can integrate real-time BI content and deliver it to the SharePoint Portal Server with little or no programming. Phelps envisions using SharePoint in conjunction with WebFOCUS Active Reports to provide selected data to both employees and contractors, and to automate the process of obtaining comments and reviews.

“WebFOCUS allows us to develop applications and get user buy-in very quickly,” he says. “We’re meeting operational requirements and administrative requirements with the software.”

Phelps and his team have relied on Information Builders Professional Services for various projects throughout the years. “Information Builders has been very responsive, and it has been a real treat to work with them,” concludes Phelps. “When it comes to the final countdown of a mission, WebFOCUS gives us confidence that we’re ready for launch.”

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