

>> Thoropredictor.com

Transitioning from Excel to a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Application

>> Business Challenge

Several years ago the founder of Thoropredictor.com, a 20+/-year horserace handicapping enthusiast and serial entrepreneur, extended his hobby to a business. Over years of analysis and trial-and-error he had built Thoropredictor, a tool based on Excel macros and VBA that helped analyze and visualize trends in horse performance. The challenge was that the business not easily scalable because distributing and supporting an Excel-based product made it difficult to achieve mass adoption. Additionally, the data that fed Thoropredictor had to be purchased separately from a data reseller. Thoropredictor founder realized that his product needed to become an Internet-based solution that allowed for smoother distribution, easier adoption, wider acceptance and required little end-user support. He also knew that his application would have to recurrently perform a large amount of calculations and handle large data sets, so performance would be crucial for success.

>> Solution

To solve his challenge, the founder turned to Scio Consulting to develop Thoropredictor.com, an Internet-based version of his product. As a first step, Scio helped develop prototypes of the application to validate the core concepts and functionality with focus groups. By demonstrating the prototype to the management team of Equibase, the largest horseracing data provider in the U.S., Thoropredictor.com secured a data reseller license. In this way, in addition to providing the software to analyze horse performance data, Thoropredictor.com would also provide the data, creating a one-stop solution for sophisticated horserace handicappers.

During the prototyping phase, one realization that became evident was that the application dealt with large data sets, required significant data calculations and had to generate interactive visualization of data points. With these requirements, using traditional web technologies based on HTML and AJAX would put a tremendous processing burden on the Thoropredictor.com servers. Because of this, Scio recommended developing the application as a Rich Internet Application (RIA), where most of the real-time data processing and visualization would be performed in the user's Web browser.

Scio built Thoropredictor.com as a "thick" RIA client application using Adobe Flex. For the back end, Scio leveraged .NET technologies to build a robust and scalable multi-tenant Software-as-a-Service application with user profiles, billing and payment management, and other common SaaS components. Scio also helped to develop the Thoropredictor.com website using a popular Content Management System (CMS) with custom-built modules.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Customer Name

- **Thoropredictor.com**

Industry

- **Sports & Entertainment (Horse Racing)**

>> Business Challenge

- Create a scalable web application to combine historical data for over 1 million horse races and easy to use data analysis tools for horse race handicapping

>> Solution

- Scio built a highly scalable and robust SaaS application based on Microsoft .NET and Adobe Flex technologies

>> Business Value

- Interactive charts and animation for easy to use data visualization
- Fully outsourced application development and support

>> Services Provided:

- SaaS Product Definition
- SaaS Product Development

>> Related Services:

- SaaS Readiness Evaluation
- SaaS Technical Assessments

>> Thoropredictor.com

>> Business Value

Users of Thoropredictor.com are provided with novel data visualization tools, including interactive charts and animations that allow users to see horse performance throughout a race. In addition to providing users with predictive formulas, Thoropredictor.com allows each user to define and store their own handicapping formulas and apply their own data filters.

Combining the historical data provided by Equibase and the analysis tools offered in Thoropredictor.com, the company was able to provide users with a one-stop, comprehensive toolset for horse race handicapping, and is quickly gaining industry acceptance and expanding its customer base.

By building the product as a Flex application that transfers most of the heavy-lifting data manipulation to the RIA client, Scio designed a solution that allows multiple users to perform heavy calculations without requiring significant backend infrastructure, giving Thoropredictor.com a more scalable, predictable and profitable architecture.

In addition, the founder of Thoropredictor was able to completely outsource his SaaS application development, maintenance and support to Scio, eliminating the need to incur the high fixed costs of hiring his own team.

>> Next Steps

Thoropredictor.com is expected to become the leading online community and portal for horserace handicappers all over the US, and the preferred analysis tool for professional handicappers. In addition to past performance data for individual horses, the site is poised to provide statistical reports about jockeys and horse trainers that could be used in the future to make decisions beyond race handicapping. There are many plans for enhancements and complementary products that will be added to the Thoropredictor.com platform over time and Scio will continue to provide application development, maintenance and support services, as well as help design future versions of the product.



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