

Save the Children extends Synon system with LANSA



Save the Children USA (SC USA) is the leading independent organization creating lasting change for children in the USA and around the world. For 75 years, SC USA has helped children survive and thrive by improving their health, education and economic opportunities. SC USA used LANSA to provide integration and extensions to its core donor Synon system and to rebuild its Sponsorship Web site to add end user content management, donor self-service and PDF generation.

Associate VP for Sponsor and Entry Donor Marketing, **Denise Kuendig**, says, "Giving visitors to our site more control of their experience as a prospect or sponsor has greatly improved our service capabilities. That ultimately translates to helping us meet our goal of doing more for children in communities where we work."

Giving Users More Control

Save the Children USA is a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, a global network of 28 independent organizations working to ensure the well-being and protection of children in more than 120 countries. In fiscal year 2007, SC USA spent 90 percent of all expenditure on program services and consistently receives the top Charity Navigator rating.

It is important for SC USA to offer easy access to sponsorship programs on its own Web site, as well as easy integration with information from third-party fundraisers and events. But SC USA was hampered by limitations in its IT architecture.

Its Web site had facilities to view available sponsorship programs and register as a

sponsor, but was hard to maintain and lacked self-service functionality. SC USA needed a more dynamic solution that users could maintain themselves.

SC USA uses several systems and platforms to manage its donations, sponsorship programs, field office information and financials. The core Synon 2E donor and sponsorship information system was developed in-house in the mid-1990s and contains a huge amount of information and business rules that need to be used by other systems, including the Sponsorship Web site.

SC USA had already used LANSA to extend its core donor system and decided to use LANSA for its new Sponsorship Web site including content management and generation of PDF Welcome Kits and receipts.

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The Sponsorship Web Site

The new Sponsorship Web site was built with LANSA's XML/XSL-based Web Application Modules (WAMs). The site's text and images are stored in files maintained by end users using a content management system built with the same LANSA technology.

With the LANSA platform, prospective sponsors can now view children who are in need of sponsorship and use the advanced search function to choose specific criteria to identify a child to sponsor. LANSA is also used to securely authorize credit card payments.

Child safety is one of SC USA's primary concerns, so the site limits the number of child profiles viewed per session and enforces timeouts. This strikes the right balance between maintaining the dignity of children who have applied for a sponsor and giving Save the Children supporters access to a personal, customized online application.

The site gives each sponsor a password-protected personalized homepage, with a picture of the sponsored child, where they live, their birthday, personality traits, daily activities and other details. When a sponsor supports more than one child, homepages can be selected from a drop down.

Using Synon APIs, the LANSA programs reuse tables and rules in the core donor system to ensure the children in greatest need are displayed with priority on the Web site and are easy to search for.

The site lets sponsors view and print a PDF of their official charitable tax deduction receipt online using LANSA Integrator. The sponsor can also download a template to write a letter or email the sponsored child via the local SC USA field office.

LANSA Integrator is used to manage and process various donor communications, including the Digital Case History solution, which contains about 30 templates used to generate PDF Welcome Kits for donors. The templates are maintained by users in the sponsorship department avoiding the need for programmers to make changes to the text.

The child-related information is managed by SC USA's Windows-based Assist system,



Save the Children USA has increased the self-sufficiency of the staff in the Sponsorship department as they no longer have to wait for a developer to update the Web site.

which maintains all the information about the children, their family, where they live, what school programs they are involved with, and so on. A small subset of this information is kept on the System i and, once a child is sponsored, is linked to the donor. For sponsored children, the donor ID is also kept in the Assist system, so there is two-way integration.

For each new sponsorship, the LANSA application determines the appropriate template, based on factors such as the child's age and country, and sources the information from the System i and a photo of the child from the Windows-based Assist system.

The Welcome Kit contains a lot of information, such as confirmation of the sponsor's details, child or project specific information, how to get in touch with the child, and so on. Printing that information and putting the kit together manually was complex and time consuming.

"Now the Welcome Kit is generated automatically. It could be sent electronically if the sponsor wants, saving time and effort," says **Lee Steuber**, Deputy Chief Technology Officer and Applications Director at Save the Children USA.

Uploading Electronic Feeds

SC USA receives data such as new and updated donor contact and commitment details from various sources for various projects. SC USA used LANSA to build a system to upload and process this data, which is received in fixed file, CSV, tab delimited and many other formats. The upload system has a modular, parameter-driven design that uses workflow and data mapping components to provide a flexible, self-documenting interface to the core donor system.

The user interface was built with Visual LANSA with backend processing done by LANSA iSeries functions and Synon APIs.

Using five basic components, the system can be set up to perform a variety of functions, such as data validation, duplicate donor checking and resolution, donor creation, and donation and commitment processing. All transactions are integrated as required into the core Synon-based donor system.

Christine Lay, business analyst and project leader, explains that SC USA spends a lot of time resolving duplicate donors once they are in the system, so preventing a duplicate



Save the Children USA IT team, from left to right: Glen Norton, Lee Steuber, Nadia O'Dell, Dominic Machado, Christine Lay, Qing Wang and Santha Kumar.

getting into the system saves time and money. "Validating canvassing commitments for duplications and mapping the data submitted by vendor to the values required for the donor database and creating financial transaction and canvasser logs has saved the Sponsorship department an estimated two hours a day during first year of use."

Upload files can be used for very high volume campaigns, such as collections for the Boxing Day Tsunami and events like 'American Idol Gives Back', where people can make donations via toll-free lines and the Internet. Steuber adds an interesting anecdote about an unusual upload example.

"Two years ago we had a 'Caps for the Capital' program. As it was our 75th anniversary, we were aiming for 75,000 baby caps. But we received well over 380,000 that took one floor of a whole wing in our building. We worked with a large number of volunteers to enter the data in spreadsheets and processed these in the Upload system, avoiding the need to rekey any data."

The Benefits of LANSA

"With LANSA, we doubled the number of our people who can do development on a project. LANSA Version 11 was easy to learn for our PC developers who are familiar with

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VB and Delphi. PC developers instantly feel familiar with Visual LANSA. This means we have more flexibility on who can be assigned to which project," concludes Lay.

"One advantage of extending and integrating the donor system with LANSA using Synon APIs, is that we can reuse the core logic that has been functioning for over 10 years and is already tried and tested. We get the best of both worlds by combining the ease-of-use and quick development capabilities of LANSA with the extensive business rules and complex logic in our legacy systems."

"LANSA has been of particular benefit to the Sponsorship Department," concludes Steuber. "We have increased the attractiveness of the Sponsorship Web site and given more control to sponsors and prospective sponsors."

"We have also increased the self-sufficiency of the Sponsorship Department. Using the content management system they can change the text and images on the Web site themselves and by altering a template they can also change the way a letter or Welcome Kit is phrased. Having that business department self-sufficient improves ROI as well." ■

COMPANY AND SYSTEM INFORMATION

- Save the Children USA, based in Westport, Connecticut, is a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, a global network of 28 independent Save the Children organizations working to ensure the well-being and protection of children in more than 120 countries. For 75 years, Save the Children USA has been helping children survive and thrive by improving their health, education and economic opportunities and, in times of acute crisis, mobilizing rapid life-saving assistance to help children recover from the effects of war, conflict and natural disasters.
- For more information visit: www.savethechildren.org