

PRO/5 Turns Over New Leaf

By Elisabeth Monaghan

T

wo years ago, New Leaf Distributing decided it was time to add an online ordering process. Because Customers of the 25-year old distributor of new age and spiritual books had been requesting online ordering for quite some time, New Leaf looked forward to providing Customers an easier mechanism for ordering.

Initially, New Leaf selected a vendor whose web-based application had been designed with an SQL database. This required moving over a lot of data, taking a great deal of time and resources. While the software package provided web ordering, it wasn't long before New Leaf realized that this application was too cumbersome and began to explore a different solution.

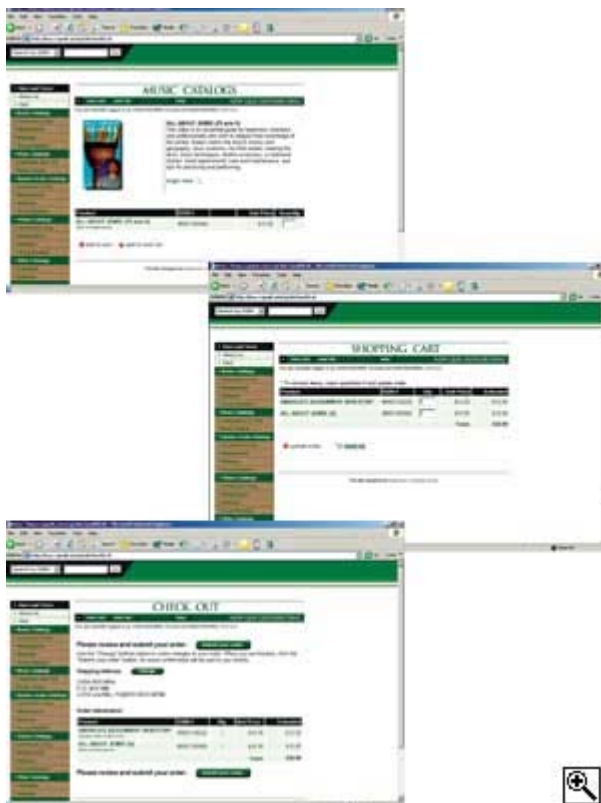


New Leaf didn't want to make another mistake in selecting its web application. They needed a scalable solution that would be viable for years to come. So they called a company with whom they had prior experience, Response Computer Group. Response had converted their accounting and order entry packages to BBx® back in the early '90s. New Leaf's former IS Manager, Ned Daughdrille explains, "When Response converted our old system to a BBx system running on UNIX, it was implemented over a long weekend and turned out to be a very cost-effective solution." Considering their past positive experience with Response Computer Group, current manager Art Cummings contacted Response's Vice President Randy Ennis and asked about the possibility of revamping New Leaf's web ordering system.

Regarding Response's approach to solving New Leaf's dilemma, Ennis explains, "Our answer to New Leaf's need was very simple. We started with our existing PRO/5-based B2B web application developed by our senior programmer, Bill Clauges. Clauges has many years of experience with BASIS technology and is a seasoned developer of web-based applications. Under Clauges's direction, we modified our application to interface with New Leaf's specific Customer, inventory and order entry file structure."



Response Computer Group installed New Leaf's online ordering application earlier this summer. While it is still in its early stages, it is evident to Ned Daughdrille that this application is the more advanced solution they had sought. According to Response Computer's Ennis, "New Leaf has only seen the tip of the iceberg with this new PRO/5-based web application. They are discovering how much more tightly integrated their whole system is. Future possibilities include a Business to Consumer (B2C) web application, shipping automation, and integrated credit card processing." Daughdrille sees these features, plus the scalability, as precisely the kind of web solution he intended to have the first time around.



Daughdrille hopes others will learn from his experience. His advice to companies exploring B2B web-based applications is to work closely with developers to ensure that they understand your needs early on. It is also important for the company who will be using the application to be clear on what they need the application to do. "Changing software after the fact is both costly and time-consuming," says Daughdrille. He adds, "Working with a developer that uses flexible, scalable technology like BBX assures us that this is an application we won't outgrow."

New Leaf's online ordering system, from item selection, to shopping cart, to check out.

www.

**For more information on New Leaf Distributing,
visit www.newleaf-dist.com**

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**For more information on Response Computer Group,
visit www.rcgweb.com**