

SUCCESS STORY

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Dorian Business Systems uses activePDF Toolkit to Automatically Generate Pixel-perfect Mailing Labels

Company: Dorian Business Systems

Industry: Education/Software

Product(s) Used: activePDF Toolkit

Company Overview

Founded by a music teacher in 2001, Dorian Business Systems provides web-based software targeting a variety of industries. Dorian’s flagship product, Charms Music Office Assistant, is an all-encompassing software package that enables music teachers to organize and manage student data and class events. Their most popular product to date, Charms is used by nearly 6,000 teachers nationwide.

Business Challenge

Charms Music Office Assistant helps music teachers organize all aspects of their classes, including student data, event calendars, music libraries, inventory control, parent communication, performance tracking, and much more. Information submitted by Charms users is stored in an online database, which can be accessed via a standard web browser using a supplied login ID and password. Catering to a wide range of users with varying degrees of computer expertise, Charms has been designed to address all the day-to-day needs of music teachers while remaining easy to use. One of the many features Charms offers is the ability to extract student contact information directly from the database, which can be used in printing mailing labels. Historically, the process involved querying the database data, using HTML to format the results to fit a standard mailing label. The formatted text would then be displayed in the web browser, at which point it could be copied and pasted into Microsoft Word®, or downloaded as an HTML file and merged with a Word document for printing. To ensure the labels printed correctly, this procedure required customers to precisely configure settings for both Word and the destination printer.

Despite detailed instructions, this process did not always yield accurately printed labels. Differences in printers and word processors meant that each client configuration required manual fine-tuning, often resulting in sheet after sheet of incorrectly printed labels before the right settings were found. “[Customers] had to go back and forth between the HTML output and a settings screen to adjust the bottom margin, so it would fit accurately on label stock,” said Michael Baker, President and Head of Development, “We needed a system that would work 100% of the time.” The manual process was frustrating and time consuming, and the Dorian team grew concerned about the impact on customer satisfaction, particularly among some of their novice users.

The need for an automated solution was clear. Developers at Dorian determined that output from the system necessitated a universal format for quick, no-hassle printing. Additionally, as Charms is entirely web-based, the ideal solution would be accessible through the web. As the developers did not want to require their clients to install additional software, they knew a server-based solution was in order, one that could be easily integrated within the existing Charms environment. After identifying PDF as the format of choice, due to its pixel-perfect representation across a wide variety of operating systems and printing devices, Baker and his team began searching for a server-side product that would allow them to streamline the mailing label creation process.

activePDF Solution

After evaluating a variety of PDF manipulation tools, Baker selected activePDF Toolkit. Licensed per server, with no per-user or per-document fees, Toolkit’s programmable COM object afforded the Dorian team the flexibility they needed at an affordable cost. Offering a wide range of features, Baker recognized that Toolkit could easily be used to create and populate the PDF templates for presentation directly within a web browser, without requiring users to install additional software beyond the free Adobe Reader®. Baker was also pleased with the support services offered by activePDF as well as the ease of implementation, “We had excellent support,” cites Baker, “We just had to learn to code one page in [Toolkit], with help from their tech support, and Poof! It was implemented.”

Upon purchasing Toolkit, Baker and the team at Dorian were quickly able to create PDF templates for the required label sizes and integrate Toolkit with Charms. Using a standard web browser, customers are presented with the option to print mailing labels from their records using the desired label size. Applying the client’s selections, the database is queried and Toolkit is used to populate the appropriate PDF template with the resultant data. Almost instantly, the completed PDF is delivered to the user’s browser for printing or downloading.

Results

The new system has introduced immeasurable improvements to customer satisfaction, enabling clients to quickly produce professional-looking, ready-to-use labels without requiring manual tweaking. "activePDF saves my customers from endless configuration hassles when trying to print mailing labels directly from the web browser," says Baker. Using Toolkit to automatically populate the predefined PDF templates produces consistent print results from any machine, eliminating the wasted label stock incurred due to incorrectly printed label sheets.

The team at Dorian is pleased with the improvements to usability and efficiency afforded by their implementation of Toolkit. "Now, the label instructions read 'Print labels' and that's it," says Baker, "100% accuracy, every time." Since implementing Toolkit with Charms, Dorian has integrated similar functionality into several of their other products, including incorporation of a barcode label printing feature to NYSMusicFest.com, an online contest management tool. Additional projects are already in development, such as a solution that will allow clients to quickly print customized PDF forms for contest entries. "Our customers are very, very happy with the new system," remarks Baker. "[They] are asking for more and more PDF printables, and can't wait until we roll out other print technologies with [Toolkit]."