ROBOHELP® SURPASSES ACTIONET'S™ HELP AUTHORING EXPECTATIONS

"RoboHelp has been a valuable investment because it not only surpasses our Help authoring expectations, but also serves other purposes that have resulted in significant cost savings."

- John T. Holmes II, Technical Lead

Organization Overview
ActioNet specializes in Enterprise Web/Software Development, Data Warehousing, Systems Integration, and Training and Security for federal and commercial clients. Because of its commitment to delivering the highest quality services, ActioNet must apply the most up-to-date technologies and tools to maintain its competitive edge. ActioNet has been a recipient of the DOT Outstanding Women-Owned Business Enterprise Award and was featured in the March 2001 DOT Transportation Link Newsletter.

Business Need
In 1998, ActioNet was selected by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to provide application maintenance and new application development. More recently FTA asked ActioNet to create its Change Tracking System (CTS) which was initially developed in ASP. The purpose of the CTS was to assist staff members with tracking internal requests for changes in information technology. The CTS would enable FTA analysts, help desk workers, application developers and the management team to create, edit and view Configuration Change Requests (CCRs) and Software Change Requests (SCRs). A CCR is submitted for changes related to email, desktop commercial software, hardware, telecommunications equipment, servers and upgrades or office moves, while an SCR is issued for changes associated with any of the FTA intranet applications. Each process would allow changes to be tracked, requests to be evaluated, and provide data for informed management decisions giving them the ability to track the level of work associated with each.

The CTS went live in March of 2002, only two months after initial requirements were developed. The application was so successful that the FTA requested ActioNet to broaden the scope by conducting major upgrades to both the CTS and the Help system. Since the original application was developed in ASP, it was a natural progression for the team to re-develop version 2.0 using the Microsoft .NET development platform. Version 2.0 went live in July 2002, resulting in another speedy development phase.
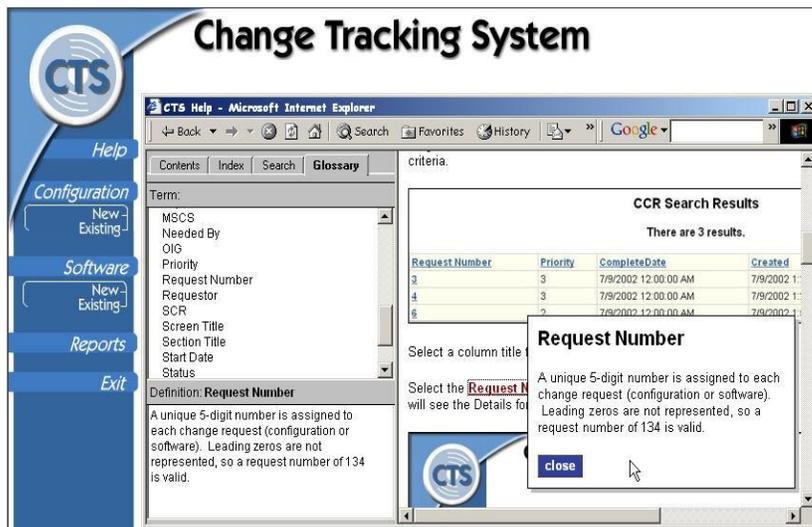
FTA analysts, help desk workers and application developers can quickly find definitions to various terms and acronyms found in the CTS Help system created by RoboHelp.

Industry
Enterprise Web/Software Development

Scenario
ActioNet was tasked by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to create its Change Tracking System (CTS) and the Help system. The CTS would assist staff members with tracking internal requests for changes in information technology.

ActioNet needed a Help authoring tool (HAT) that would support the .NET environment and simplify the development of the Help system as well as the corresponding printed documentation that the FTA required.

Solution
ActioNet experienced a smooth transition from the original application that was developed in ASP to version 2.0 developed in ASP.NET. RoboHelp worked seamlessly with the new version of the CTS and did not require any additional tasks to create the Help system.

Separately, RoboHelp's printed documentation feature has enabled ActioNet to quickly respond to customer requests now that the team can generate hard-copy material from the source material. In addition, RoboHelp proved to be an effective alternate method for user training. Now, ActioNet's Help systems also serve as its main training tools and have virtually replaced printed user manuals and training materials. The change has resulted in a 20 percent drop in support calls in one year.

Product
RoboHelp Office

ActioNet needed a Help authoring tool (HAT) to simplify the development of a Help system for the CTS and the corresponding printed documentation that the FTA required. Since version 2.0 was developed using ASP.NET, ActioNet required a HAT that would support the .NET environment. RoboHelp was the answer.

Solution

John T. Holmes II, Technical Lead for the CTS development project, explains the reasons for choosing .NET and RoboHelp. "The .NET framework allows developers to increase productivity while reducing the complexity of code. The framework comes equipped with classes to access various types of data sources and execute common tasks. The efficiency is remarkable and worked seamlessly with RoboHelp."

Technical writer Faye Newsham was brought on-board ActioNet in 2001 because of her Help authoring expertise. "I personally have been using RoboHelp for more than 12 years and when I started on this project, I knew we could rely on the tool's ease-of-use and versatility to produce online Help for Web-based applications developed in .NET and other technologies."

"As the Help system developer, I appreciated the smooth transition that RoboHelp afforded me from ASP to ASP.NET. I had NO additional tasks to create the Help system for the new version that were related to ASP.NET itself," states Newsham.

The CTS project has been a tremendous success for ActioNet and the overall results from RoboHelp have been equally impressive. The company experienced an increase in customer satisfaction and an influx of new projects, success they attributed largely to RoboHelp and ASP.NET. RoboHelp's printed documentation feature has enabled ActioNet to quickly respond to customer requests now that the team can generate hard-copy material from the source material. For example, customers will often ask for a copy of their glossary that previously resided only in the glossary pop-up fields and had to be converted to text, then organized and alphabetized. Now, the Help author can call up a report on the glossary and quickly email it to customers.

In addition, ActioNet was pleasantly surprised when it discovered the advantage of using RoboHelp as an alternate method for user training. "Many of our Help systems now also serve as our main training tools, so we have realized a 50 percent reduction in overall user documentation. User manuals and training materials have virtually been replaced. Since we've implemented these Help systems, we've experienced a 20 percent drop in support calls in the last year," reports Newsham. "We have high hopes that this will facilitate the training of employees across FTA local and regional offices."

The Help systems are also being used as part of the company's internal training and quality assurance devices. ActioNet developers often refer to the Help systems to refresh their memories on certain functions of large applications and/or verify that the current operation is in line with the published purpose of the application.

John T. Holmes II   *Faye Newsham*
Technical Lead   *Technical Writer*
ActioNet, Inc.   *ActioNet, Inc.*

About eHelp Corporation

Founded in 1991, eHelp Corporation (formerly Blue Sky Software) is a worldwide leader in automated user assistance software for applications, intranets, and the Web. eHelp's software products reduce support costs and increase customer satisfaction by dramatically improving the usability of Windows and Web-based applications, intranets and Web sites. As the industry standard in Help authoring, RoboHelp provides the foundation to more than 250 million online Help and user assistance systems currently in use around the world. eHelp's products have won more than 60 prestigious industry awards and more than two-thirds of Fortune 1000 companies are customers. For more information, visit http://www.ehelp.com.

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