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Visual PRO/5 Paves The Way For New Orleans Visitors Bureau

By Elisabeth Monaghan

Planning an event, whether large or small, is no easy task. First there is a great deal of research required to determine which is the best location. Then there are a number of decisions to make including hotels, transportation options, restaurants, and entertainment, to name a few. Add to this a myriad of administrative tasks such as registration, database maintenance and financial transaction management, and it's easy to understand why convention and visitors bureaus need a robust application to handle the growing demands of a convention and tourist market. Fortunately, event and meeting planners, considering New Orleans for their destination can rely upon the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau (NOMCVB) AMS Destination Management Application, written in Visual PRO/5®, for a comprehensive solution. All aspects of the event planning process, from the initial meeting up through the actual event, are handled by this destination application.

While many convention and visitors bureaus perform the same services as the NOMCVB, they require purchasing multiple applications developed by a variety of vendors to provide the same breadth of information as NOMCVB's destination management application. For NOMCVB, running a different system for financials and then another for destination management was not an option. Being one of the top ten CVBs in the United States, NOMCVB can't afford any downtime. Nor can they afford to suddenly discover that their database has reached the maximum number of users it can support. As NOMCVB's Vice President of Information Systems, Mike Magee explains, "We are a large bureau that consists of a membership department, convention sales department, tourism sales department, public affairs department, convention services department, and finance department. Each is run like a separate company, but all of them access information from and feed information back into a central database."



New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau home page.

To develop a fully integrated application that could support NOMCVB's numerous departments, Magee's organization turned to Integrated Systems Services' Association Management Software. Integrated Systems Services' Visual PRO/5-based package enables users to run separate modules, while giving them the ability to add additional modules, as needed. According to Magee, "The nice thing about the application is that these separate departments can feed into one database, link to other parts of the database, and all the while, the information remains current, while the system remains stable." What first drew the bureau to this package was its ability to handle financial data, combined with a convention services module and membership module. At the time, no other software developer offered a similar program. Integrated Systems Services' president, Russ Evans, maintains that convention bureaus would be hard-pressed to find a comparable application, even today.

Since its installation in 1994, the AMS application has kept up with NOMCVB's growth. Magee and his team have never been limited by the database system, which is critical, considering that a number of those using the NOMCVB database work remotely and need to access and download current information. Because Visual PRO/5 is so flexible, Magee's team is able to easily extract data out of the system and put it into other formats. As Magee extols the virtues of NOMCVB's application, he makes a point of crediting Russ Evans with creating robust programs that "simply do not break." Based on the excellent track record that Russ Evans and Integrated Systems Services has had with the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Magee is looking forward to taking the next step on his state-of-the-art site. Magee and Evans are now preparing for migration to BBj®, with a projected rollout in 2003. Watch the BASIS Advantage web site at www.basis.com/advantage/index/html for updates on this migration.



New Orleans Visitors Bureau

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