Success Story

3rdRail
Ruby on Rails IDE

ORGANIZATION
Labrador Technologies, Inc.

LABRADOR
TECHNOLOGIES INC.
"Celebrating our 27th year"

APPLICATION
Secure, web-based data browser and display tool for accessing data and displaying reports.

IDE OF CHOICE
3rdRail™ – Complete Ruby on Rails IDE from Embarcadero

CHALLENGES
Create a subscription-based, web application accessible to users come from every corner of the oil and gas industry – exploration companies, service companies, financial companies, and government agencies.

RESULTS
A Web based app with the look and feel of a desktop application, providing easy access to data from over 700,000 Canadian oil wells.

Minimal IT support requirements.

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>
> – Lori Olsen, Senior Architect and Consultant

INTRODUCTION

Lori Olsen is a senior architect and consultant for Labrador Technologies, Inc. (LTI). LTI has specialized in the oil and gas data retrieval business for over 27 years. Most recently, Lori helped LTI to develop a new secure, web-based data browser and display tool that allows users to access critical data from the GeoLOGIC data center – which stores data for over 700,000 Canadian wells, as well as information on pipelines, land, services and more. The resulting product named eTriever™ (www.etriever.com), is a subscription-based, web application built using Embarcadero's 3rdRail Ruby on Rails IDE. It's a data mining application that makes it easy for users to access data and display reports, charts and graphs on well, land and pipeline data. End users come from every corner of the oil and gas industry – exploration companies, service companies, nancial companies, and government agencies.

A CHANGE OF PLANS

Using Ruby on Rails to build eTriever had not been the original plan. The project was originally scoped to be done in .NET. However, the weekend before development work was to start, fate intervened. Lori and another LTI engineer happened to attend a "No Fluff Just Stuff" Java symposium in Toronto. According to Olsen, "in Java presentation after presentation, all the speakers couldn't stop talking about Rails. I started thinking that I should give it a look for the eTriever project."

Back at LTI, Olsen and her team spent two weeks at the beginning of the project seeing how far they could get using Rails. To their surprise, they got much further then expected. "Some of our other customers wanted projects that integrated between Java and .NET. Rails, with all its support for Web services, can interoperate with anything. And we were demonstrating to ourselves that you could indeed develop as fast as some of the Java presenters had claimed."

FOR JAVA DEVELOPERS, 3RDRAIL IS THE PATH TO RUBY ON RAILS

Lori started using Rails over 2 years ago, but there was nothing in the way of an IDE. "Coming from a Java background, I wanted a single place where I could do everything. It was frustrating needing to have multiple windows open – a window for the version control system, a browser open for testing, a couple of terminal windows to run server in one, unit tests in one, and functional tests in another."

"People who come from a Java environment and are looking at Ruby, want an IDE. 3rdRail is the IDE they're looking for. 3rdRail gives you the familiar command line interface called Commanders, that lets you execute your Ruby and Rails commands plus it provides productivity features like code completion so you don't need to remember the exact syntax for every command. 3rdRail has many other great features like the ability to run unit tests in a window and if test fails, you can go directly to the location where the test failed. A huge time saver and productivity boost."

"Another useful feature is the Dependencies View. While navigating source code, you can use the Dependencies View to track all the dependencies of that specific area of code. You get a much better understanding of the interdependencies and relationship that area of code has with the entire project."

"The Rails Explorer has evolved since the initial version, and has become quite indispensable. When you look at your Rails project, there can be a lot of files and information associated with it – like models, configurations, database tables, scripts – there's a lot you need to remember. Using good naming conventions can help. But what if you forget a certain table name? Going against a huge data model with 30-40 attributes? In the Rails Explorer you can quickly pop open the project and look at all the attributes associated with it. It's all integrated, so you don't have to open yet another data viewing application."

Before settling into 3rdRail, Lori tried other Rails development tools. "We took a look at TextMate and RadRails, but found they just weren't all there. 3rdRail is way ahead in terms of features and stability. And 3rdRail's license includes maintenance, which gives me continuous access to functional updates."

Building an Enterprise Quality Application with 3rdRail eTriever may not be considered a typical Rails application. It's not a start from scratch "greenfield" application, but is more enterprise oriented. The application connects to two databases at the same time and has potential to simultaneously connect to many databases. One database contains all the user data, application preferences, and data center accounts. When a user logs in we use this information to connect them to other databases where they do their searches.

RAILS WEB APPLICATION IS A HIT WITH I.T.

One of the interesting results is that people sometimes forget it's a web application.

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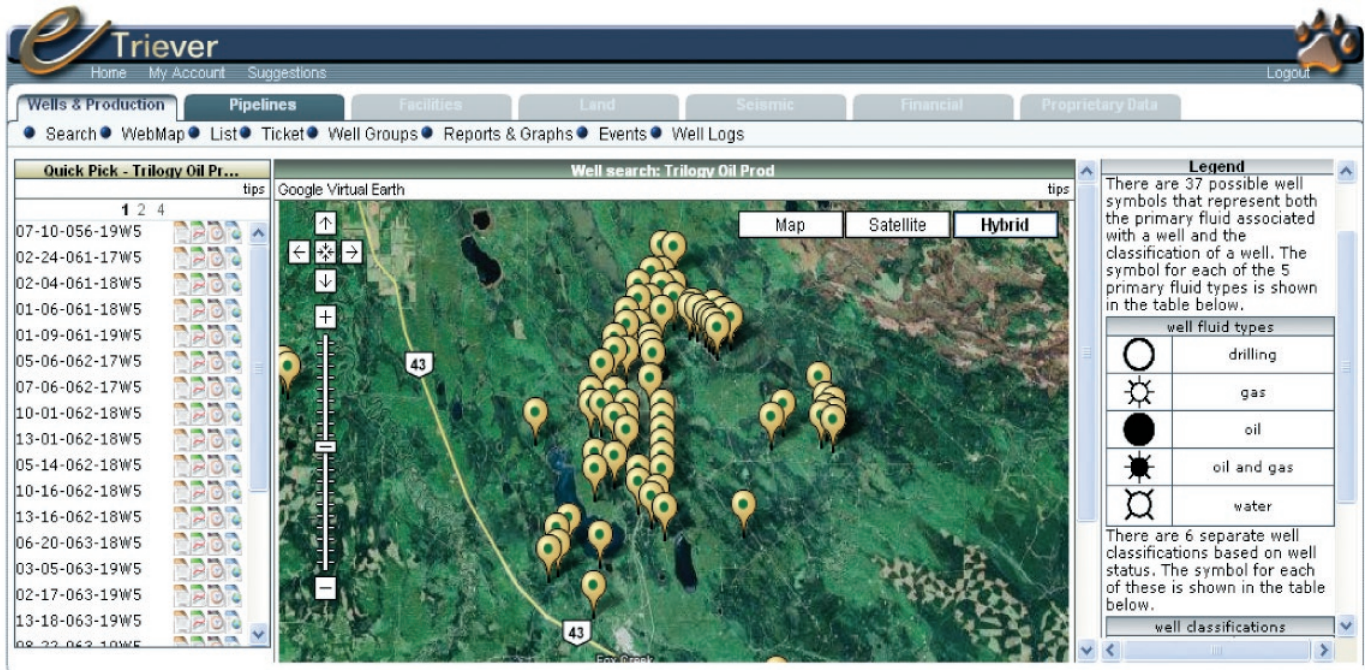> – Lori Olsen, Senior Architect and Consultant

The user experience is much more like a desktop application. When we demonstrate all the functionality and benefits of using eTriever, people often ask, "How often do I have to update it?" I love this question because, of course, the answer is 'you don't.' Updates are automatically published to the server." eTriever accesses an online database that is updated every day, so data is always up to date.

When IT departments understand that this is a service, a Web application, they get very excited. Their users just have to sign up for an account, make sure they have a data center account and they're done. There is minimal intervention or support for IT required. And in today's world with many IT departments needing to reduce costs, or else face functions being outsourced, this can be a huge advantage.

3RDRAIL PUTS THE FUN BACK IN CODING

Rails people don't just talk about how much more productive and fast they are, but how much more fun they're having. According to Olsen, "it's hard to describe if you're not a developer, but 3rdRail takes away the boring configuration stuff and makes coding fun again."

Embarcadero delivers innovative, high-productivity development tools for a wide spectrum of software developers, from individuals to enterprise teams. In 2008, Embarcadero Technologies acquired the Developer Tools Division of Borland to focus on technical innovation and support for software developers. Embarcadero now has more than 25 years of market leadership, and over 3 million developers using its products worldwide.

Built with codegear's 3rdRail, Ruby on Rails IDE, eTreiver helps people across Canada's oil and gas industry to access key data from over 700,000 wells.