



Microsoft MapPoint System Partner Solution Case Study

The power of location



Overview

Country: United States
Industry: Government, Retail

Customer Profile

Competitive Computing, Inc. is a consulting firm offering strategic planning, application development, website design, enterprise infrastructure environments, and managed support services.

Business Situation

Competitive Computing was seeking to increase revenues and expand into new markets.

Solution

Using the power of MapPoint Web Service, Competitive Computing is developing location solutions for government, retail and education customers.

Benefits

- Up to 10 % revenue growth seen
- Future growth fueled
- Development time reduced 30 %
- Easy, flexible programming

Location Partner On the Road to Building Business

“Over the next 12 months, we expect location solutions to boost sales by up to 10 percent. They are starting to play a larger role in our revenue stream.”

Steve Thurlow

Vice President of Business Development

Competitive Computing (C₂)

This Microsoft Gold Certified Partner needed to develop location solutions that generated more business. Competitive Computing (C₂) has just begun to accelerate into the new business opportunity lane, with Microsoft® MapPoint® Web Service. One of its first customers, Vermont’s Department of Tourism, immediately saw the C₂ website solution as the clear winner. Rural businesses needed marketing and accurate geocoding, which MapPoint Web Service delivered immediately. Tourists needed a single source of information about and directions to lodging, dining, events and attractions. Again, MapPoint Web Service delivered the horsepower, linking businesses with thrilled visitors. Competitive Computing is seeing its location-related sales accelerate up to 10 percent and its development time drop three times as much with MapPoint APIs and design tools.

Microsoft
MapPoint

“Powerful MapPoint APIs shaved 30 percent off our development time. Customizing rural ‘lat/long’ data for greater mapping accuracy just wouldn’t be possible without flexible APIs.”

Melissa Dever

Vice President of Engineering

Competitive Computing (C2)

Situation

Vermont-based Competitive Computing, Inc., or C2, is a leader in strategic business technology solutions, particularly in the areas of government, retail and education. It is a full-service consulting firm offering strategic planning, application development, website design, enterprise infrastructure environments, and managed support services. C2 is has been a Microsoft partner for 12 years, is located in Colchester, Vt., and has 60 employees.

Competitive Computing was looking to grow its business by seeking new markets and powerful technologies that serve as solution building-blocks for its customers.

Microsoft MapPoint Web Service was one of the Competitive Computing technology stars.

Solution

C2 immediately recognized the promising MapPoint business opportunities to be found within its current customer base. One of its largest clients, the state of Vermont (18 agencies and departments within the Marketing and Promotional Partnership), was a perfect choice for which the company could explore the power of location as a solution ingredient.

The most obvious opportunity was integrating Microsoft MapPoint Web Service into the state’s website for its Department of Tourism and Marketing, at www.vermontvacation.com. Nearly 4,400 Vermont businesses, many rural, needed to be marketed. And most of the five million annual visitors to the state need directions for finding those businesses. This was a match made for mapping.

The initial mapping solution the Department of Tourism and Marketing experimented with was MapQuest. But ultimately MapQuest was replaced because of price, the desire for

custom geo-coding capability, and the cumbersome CGI-based development environment.

Custom geo-coding was a particularly critical element. Many Vermont businesses were small, entrepreneurial craftsmen or picturesque inns located in rural settings and thus potentially difficult for visitors to find. Recreational sites and event sponsors also faced the problems of awareness and location.

Further, a ban on billboards and laws restricting roadside signage limited the ability of businesses to communicate directly with tourists for more comprehensive information and directions. Businesses had a marketing problem: accurate business and location information. And, interested visitors had a knowledge-access problem: what’s available and how do they get there?

So, using the IT expertise of C2, MapPoint Web Service and its powerful development tools and environment, the Department of Tourism and Marketing found the right location solution for its website. For instance, customized latitude and longitude (“lat/long”) capabilities within MapPoint Web Service solved the marketing and accuracy problems associated with rural business addresses.

“Vermont businesses have the ability to upload and customize their data sets as a part of MapPoint Web Service,” said Bruce Hyde, Vermont commissioner of Tourism and Marketing. “If some locations are discovered not to be geocoded properly, a simple tool allows a new lat/long ‘push pin’ to be placed that generates the precise location when a query is submitted.”

The MapPoint Web Service-enabled website also solved the tourist’s knowledge-access problem by delivering comprehensive information about Vermont’s businesses

“Personalized travel itineraries will soon be added. Website visitors can identify, secure and customize locations and routes for a vacation’s worth of activities: lodging, food, recreation and events.”

Bruce Hyde

Commissioner of Tourism

Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing

along with precise maps and directions. Thus the website helps generate revenue by directly linking businesses to enthusiastic visitors.

For example, an intuitive Travel Planner allows a website visitor to discover lodging, dining, event and attraction options along with detailed maps and driving instructions. Under each category, a user can conduct a multilayer search that may include key word or town, region or other criteria. Want directions to a cozy little inn located in the Northeast Kingdom area with a sauna, is dog-friendly and has a data port? A few appropriately checked boxes send the query to Vermont’s Microsoft SQL Server database which passes the location information on to Microsoft MapPoint Web Service where detailed maps and directions are returned in seconds.

Benefits

Up to 10 percent revenue growth seen; future growth fueled with MapPoint Web Service solutions

Like other MapPoint partners, Competitive Computing sees many opportunities to increase location-based sales. For them, other state and local government agencies are of particular interest.

“Over the next 12 months, we expect location solutions to boost sales by up to 10 percent,” said Steve Thurlow, Vice President of Business Development. “They are starting to play a larger role in our revenue stream.”

Competitive Computing sees possibilities for MapPoint Web Service beyond the Department of Tourism and Marketing in Vermont’s Human Services area.

“The state’s Human Services wants to streamline the finding of medical services,” continued Thurlow. “Which doctors take Medicaid? Where’s the nearest obstetrician? These are questions that are answered with a location solution.”

Development time reduced 30 percent; easy, flexible programming

“Powerful MapPoint APIs shaved 30 percent off our development time,” said Melissa Dever, vice president of engineering, C2. “Customizing rural lat/long data for greater mapping accuracy just wouldn’t be possible without flexible APIs.”

Using standards such as SOAP and XML, MapPoint Web Service puts location solutions within easy grasp of virtually any developer, without the need to expand specific GIS or mapping knowledge.

Also, applications based on MapPoint Web Service can be developed in a wide range of programming languages, including Java, Perl and others found in tools such as Microsoft Visual Studio® .NET.

“Another reason we like the MapPoint Web Service environment is that it enables developers to easily create applications for a wide range of PCs and mobile devices,” said Dever. “That’s something Vermont may consider for its Wi-Fi-capable rest stops.”

Vermont Commissioner of Tourism Bruce Hyde has identified other potential location solution opportunities for Competitive Computing.

“One of the statewide initiatives is 511 service — real-time emergency, accident and road closure information,” Hyde said. “We hope to add this new website capability in the next 12 months. Of course MapPoint Web

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Service will play a vital role displaying maps and alternate route information on demand.”

“Personalized travel itineraries will soon be added. Website visitors can identify, secure and customize locations and routes for a vacation’s worth of activities: lodging, food, recreation and events.”

Microsoft MapPoint System

The Microsoft MapPoint System is an integrated set of products and services that provide end-to-end mapping and location solutions that help businesses grow revenue and reduce expenses. By enabling customers to locate and track key business assets, as well as more effectively analyze business data, the MapPoint System helps customers improve business results, optimize business processes, and enhance business decisions.

For more information about Microsoft MapPoint, go to: <http://www.microsoft.com/mappoint>
Or send e-mail to: maplic@microsoft.com

Software and Services

- Technologies
 - Microsoft® MapPoint® Web Service
 - Microsoft® Visual® Studio .NET
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