

APQC[®]

Integrated website provides deep insight through visitor activity tracking



The Challenge

APQC relied on homegrown applications to support web services and collect customer information from its website, but that system had become outdated. They needed a better way to connect back-end business systems with the company website and give its business units a view into customer activity.



The Solution

Neuron ESB is an enterprise service bus designed to simplify messaging and service enablement for business and web services integration efforts. Neuron ESB provides a topic-based publish and subscribe model, complex message processing, and powerful web services and REST support – everything APQC needed to get their website redesign project off the ground.



The Benefits

- All APQC business units now have the ability to track customer metrics
- Event-based integration with Microsoft SharePoint
- Provides detailed insight into website visitor activities
- Enables seamless integration with CRM
- Creates a rich, custom experience for website visitors
- 100% REST to SOAP translation

“When we began this project, we expected it to take over six months. Neuron ESB has enabled us to complete it in less than half that time and with two fewer developers than we had originally planned, saving our company hundreds of thousands of dollars.”

Scott Sorensen, Enterprise Software Architect, APQC

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The Challenge

APQC is a member-based nonprofit and the world's leading resource for benchmarking and best practice business research. In 2010, the company had to overcome its own best-practices challenge when it discovered that its system of collecting and disseminating customer information had become outdated.

“We were in the process of upgrading our corporate website to run on Drupal, an open source content management system,” said Scott Sorensen, APQC's enterprise software architect.

“But it also became clear as we went through the process that we would need to upgrade how we connected our internal business systems that are on the back-end of our website, such as Microsoft Dynamics CRM.”

APQC had relied on home-grown applications to support web services and collect customer information from its website. “Everything before Neuron was homegrown,” said Sorensen. “Individual workers were the gatekeepers and translators, and business areas, like Supply Chain, had to manually pull customer information together.

“Sometimes that information wouldn't be collected at all because there was so little integration. We knew we needed a better way to connect our business systems with our website and give our business units a view into customer activity. More importantly, we wanted to offer our customers a rich, rewarding experience when they visited our site. That's when we started looking into an enterprise service bus (ESB) product.”

The Solution

Sorensen and his team began evaluating different ESB products that could solve the web services challenges faced during their company's website redesign project. But they soon realized that not all ESB solutions were built with their needs in mind. “We're a .NET shop, so that's the number one thing we looked for when evaluating ESB products for this project — a service bus that would support .NET,” said Sorensen.

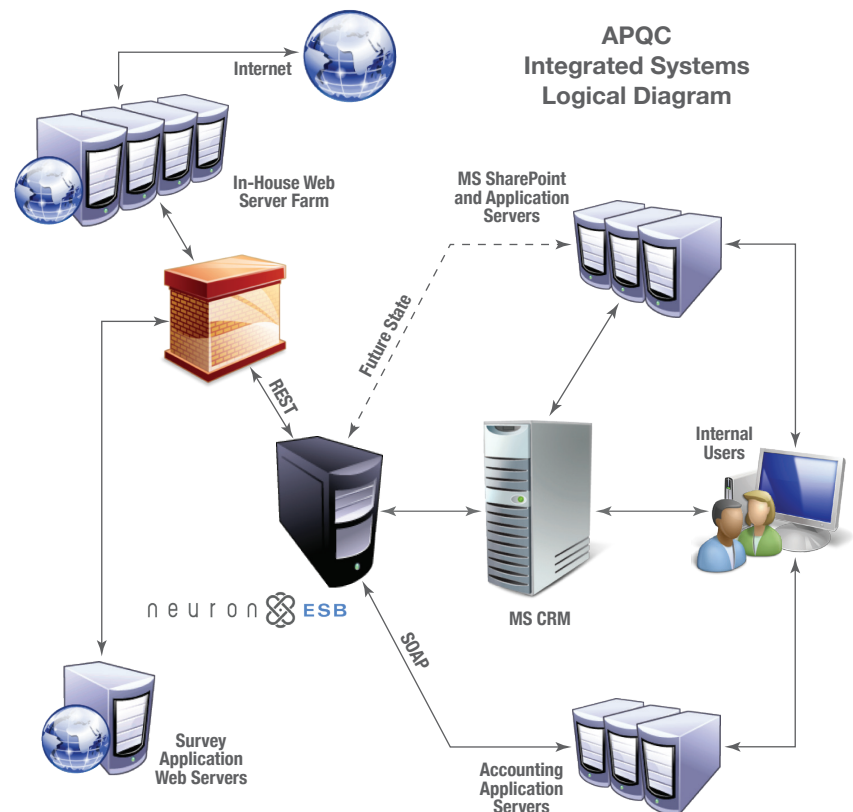
APQC also needed a solution that could translate between the company's different business systems and provide a mature CRM connector to support their customer relations efforts on the new website. “We wanted to make every visit to our website a unique experience for our customers,” said Sorensen. “By connecting our website to CRM, customers would be

able to see their recent activity — events they've attended, literature they've read and so on.”

The APQC team turned to Neuron ESB from Neudestic when other ESB solutions failed to meet their criteria. Neuron ESB is an enterprise service bus designed to simplify messaging and service enablement for business and web services integration efforts. With Neuron ESB, users can eliminate additional development and operational costs by putting their existing .NET skills to use through a .NET-friendly API.

Neuron ESB provides a topic-based publish and subscribe model, complex message processing, and powerful web services and REST support — everything APQC needed to get their website redesign project off the ground.

“What we liked about Neuron is that it spoke our language; namely .NET,” said Sorensen. “I knew I wouldn't need to learn a proprietary language to use the tool. We also needed a solution that came with connectors, especially an event-based connector for CRM to give us real-time visibility into our company's different business systems. And the fact that all inbound requests from Drupal to Neuron are RESTful made Neuron ESB a perfect fit for us.”



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The Benefits

The APQC team noticed immediate benefits once they brought Neuron ESB on-board to support their Web redesign project. “I realized right away that Neuron was the right choice because we didn't need to bring in additional consultants or developers to work with the product,” said Sorensen. “The fact that I could quickly learn and start using Neuron was huge. It meant I could spend more time creating business processes and connecting our website to our business systems and spend less time training or working with a consultant on this effort.”

Ease of use was just the first of many benefits Sorensen discovered once APQC adopted Neuron ESB. “The CRM connector that comes with Neuron is top-notch,” said Sorensen. “We've created home-grown CRM connectors, but it was never enough to do the job. Now that we have Neuron on board, individual business units are no longer gatekeepers of the customer information coming in from our website. All of our business units now have the ability to track customer metrics.” The APQC team will soon take advantage of another unique Neuron ESB feature: event-based integration with Microsoft SharePoint.

Neuron ESB empowers business units by allowing them to view and interact with customer data. Neuron ESB also gives visitors to the APQC website a rich, custom experience. “Because Neuron provides detailed insight into visitor activities, we can be

more focused on the products and services we offer,” Sorensen explained. “For instance, based off of the events they attend online or literature they download, we can identify specific areas of interest then create and promote targeted products.”

Possibly the biggest impact Neuron ESB has made to APQC, however, is to their bottom line. “When we began this project in 2010, we expected it to take over 6 months,” said Sorensen. “Neuron has enabled us to complete it in less than half that time and with two fewer developers than we had originally planned, saving our company hundreds of thousands of dollars.”

On top of these benefits, Sorensen's team discovered that they could push the envelope of their project by creating a custom online solution that lets customers sign up for events online. “From training me on how to use the Neuron business process designer to delivering a product that did everything it promised to do, Neudesic really went the extra mile,” said Sorensen. “We completed our project under time and budget, and the results speak for themselves. Neuron ESB is definitely a huge part of the success of this project.”