



IRIUM AMERICAS

As the industry goes global, so does the software.

The newest project for veteran industry software provider Bob Walters, president of Edgerton Corporation and developer of Minitrac software, was completing his company's software merger with IRIUM SAS Europe, which is now positioned to offer IRIUM software to a global market. The new company is called IRIUM Americas. Walters is celebrating his 40th anniversary providing information solutions for the equipment distributor industry.

What are the distinguishing factors of this merger and the IRIUM Software?

Most importantly, it is a global product, with substantial combined human resources and ideas being shared between both corporations.

So you have developers and staff throughout the world?

Yes. In addition to the Americas with offices in Ohio, California, and soon in Florida, our merger combines with IRIUM offices in France, United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Australia.

For the distributor, what are the primary advantages of the merger?

At a cost in excess of \$7 million and six years in the making, IRIUM was not just a rewrite of older gener-



Edgerton Corporation President Bob Walters

ation software. It was developed from the ground up with fresh ideas and based on 70 years of combined industry experience. The extensive devel-

opment staff for IRIUM means distributors can expect the best-of-breed technology today and into the future. A software product supported throughout the world with identical design allows the manufacturer and the distributor to minimize their information technology investment, because it significantly reduces duplication of effort when developing inte-

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gration programs between them.

With programming development going on in so many locations, how do you coordinate and maintain the software?

IRIUM software will always be identical throughout the world. This is accomplished by employing a sophisticated development model called Distributed Software Development, which allows us to share programming resources and common design structure.

How else do you coordinate the ongoing software development and assure this advantage?

We have organized a collaborative development structure. All IRIUM locations maintain speed, efficiency, testing methods and documentation between the 26 member programming team with developmental products such as Rational ClearCase Multisite, Rational ClearQuest, Rational ROBO and Rational Purify. Many companies use these or similar tools and have literally hundreds of programmers sharing in the design and development process. Collectively, with these development techniques, we can produce software throughout the world while maintaining consistency and achieving the highest standards of accuracy and

design discipline.

What are some of the other distinguishing characteristics of the IRIUM Software?

IRIUM is multi-currency, multi-language and multi-company structured. It is designed to operate equally as well in dealerships of less than ten users and yet has successfully competed with the largest software ven-

dors such as SAP in the 1000 plus user market. Whether a dealer is small or large and depending on its geographic market, these capabilities can be significant in doing business between various countries and across borders, while providing comprehensive information by addressing the uniqueness of each location. Dealerships, distributors and manufacturers are consolidating, creating multiple locations and more requirements for independence, as well as combined company data. That is a reality today and into the future. In order to grow and prosper, they will need to address this through their software. Therefore, the software and the companies that provide it must recognize this, as we have, as a very important part of their strategic direction.

Aside from faster development, what are the advantages of having a large team of developers?

Most importantly, the design and architecture is accomplished by a team approach of knowledgeable developers who have a variety of experience. There are products that have been written by only one or two developers; while they work fine for some time, we found them to be architecturally



IRIUM offices are based in Ohio, Florida, California, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Australia.

inadequate. If you do not have multiple developers collaborating on design, software can easily be written in a fashion that paints you into a corner, making it difficult to expand and improve. Without following programming standards, software can get convoluted.

Explain some of the technological objectives in the IRIUM Software design?

It has to have a Standard Microsoft Windows Graphical User Interface, yet with the ability to be deployed across an Internet Browser. Our Web interface can be deployed across an IIS or Apache-based server. We also needed to allow the flexibility for Web development to be written in HTML, PHP and other various languages based upon our specific customer requirements. It had to be Host-Platform independent to run on virtually any computer, and the SQL database had to have the ability to be deployed on UNIX, Linux or Windows-based servers. The design had to be a fully transactional RDBMS Relational Data Base.

Some software is touted to be relational, but in reality it is not because the database is created periodically from multiple places and tries to mimic a relational database. Consequently, software written this way creates the need for more computer overhead, causes speed constraints and results in limitations when it's searching for data.

The Minitrac Software has been very successful in our industry. Why IRIUM?

Our legacy Minitrac Software has

served the industry very well for over 25 years. So well, that when we—as many other software developers—set out to create a graphical product, we decided to develop a Graphical User Interface front end for Minitrac. The idea was good because the Minitrac Software was robust and feature-rich. While it was being developed to be browser-based and would run very well in an Internet environment, there were technology advances that were being designed in the industry, such as .NET, which we were limited in our ability to harness.

Further, because Minitrac was written in COBOL, we would always be limited to the constraints of the programming language. A modern object-oriented language now gives us the ability to be more flexible, increase our performance, and decrease our development time and costs. In the end, the

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Minitrac Software converted with a Graphical User Interface would never be able to take advantage of our customers' growing technological objectives. Our customers have been very loyal and have patiently waited for us to provide them with a graphical product, because they know that software goes through transitions. But reliable service never goes out of style.

Now that Edgerton has IRIUM, what happens to Minitrac?

The Minitrac Software does a phenomenal job for our customers. When we decided to take on IRIUM because of its technological advantages, the next best direction was to add Minitrac's great features and capabilities to IRIUM. For us and our customers, it is the best of both worlds. We will continue to support the Minitrac Software as long as we have customers using it.

In the further development of software, when do you consider it complete?

Software is no different than the procedures it addresses. There is, and always should be, continuous change and improvement in how things are done. There is always a better, more efficient way to do things. Complacency is the result of contentment. As long as we are not content and strive to find better ways to do things, our software will never be done; it will simply rise to a higher degree of competency and incompleteness.

Edgerton has been in business for almost 20 years. What is the long-term direction for Edgerton, and is there a succession plan in place?

Now that we have completed our merger and acquired a new product, built a Technology Center which offers professional training to our customers, an ASP (Application Service Provider) facility for serving our software online to our marketplace

and with \$20 million in combined annual sales, IRIUM and Edgerton's future is even more secure than ever. Plans for the future Edgerton are in place to have the company run by its employees. We are fortunate to have acquired the best staff in the industry, many of whom came from distributorships.

