

Edgewater moves American Student Assistance Corporation to the head of the class with their student loan processing system.



ASA partnered with Edgewater to:

- ▶ Develop a solution that allows for future growth in business and technology.
- ▶ Assist in getting new product and service offers to their target market in record time through the use of technology.
- ▶ Improve ASA's overall service to students, lenders, and schools.
- ▶ Implement a solution/strategy that will allow ASA to maintain their competitive advantage as a leading student loan guarantee agency.

Higher Education

American Student Assistance Corporation (ASA®) is the seventh largest student loan guarantee agency in the United States. In one year ASA can help more than 100,000 students finance higher education.

In order to stand out in a field of 36 other loan guarantors, ASA must continually provide high quality products and services to benefit schools, lenders, students, and others involved in higher education. This ideal has been ASA's mission since 1956. To fulfill their mission, ASA needs to position itself as an innovator and technology leader within the higher education industry.

Traditional Model

Success in the higher education industry depends on the ability to offer new products and services quickly. ASA's old mainframe legacy system did not allow them flexibility to respond to the changing demands of their industry.

The mainframe system was maintained by a third party. This arrangement meant that when ASA needed to introduce a new product or service, they had to go through this third party and make an entire system modification. Ultimately, a very costly and time consuming process which restricted ASA's ability to compete in their industry.

ASA found it difficult to remain current with regulatory issues and industry changes that happen frequently in the loan guarantee business. Because of their slow development cycle, ASA could not get products and services that addressed these issues to market.

This delay gave the impression that ASA was behind on their offerings and subsequently behind in their field.

ASA needed the ability to adapt and customize processing for individual customer needs. For example, ASA could not fully leverage Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) that allowed for simple data exchange with their partners. By not being able to fully participate in this data exchange method, ASA was missing out on timely information and losing customers and revenue.

To help ASA regain their competitive advantage, they partnered with Edgewater Technology, to create a strategic and technological solution to position ASA for future growth and the ability to compete with and ultimately surpass their competition.

The Business Solution

Edgewater has maintained a strong relationship with ASA since 1992. Because of this trusted relationship, Edgewater and ASA were able to build a new system from the ground up. This process took a total of 22 months with an Edgewater support staff on-site for the entire implementation, deployment, and post-deployment of the system.

The new system allows maximum flexibility for ASA. Since the project "live" date, ASA has rolled out new offerings on a quarterly basis. Today, ASA can respond to new regulatory and industry changes quickly, ensuring that each new product or service they offer is timely and 100% compliant.

In addition, Edgewater has helped ASA plan for future growth. Through a "scalable" system, ASA can accommodate an increase in loan volumes, and can integrate newer technologies as they come into use. This new system will help ASA not only maintain, but also grow their customer base to increase revenues.

With the new system, ASA is able to proactively meet individual school's and lender's needs with the ability to customize loan processing. ASA is now able to expand its customer service through quick processing, easy access to loan status, and an enhanced search capability. Now, customer service representatives quickly access a wealth of information throughout the life of a loan. With Edgewater's assistance, ASA is able to maintain their competitive advantage by leveraging web-based technologies.

The Technical Solution

ASA's new system is an object oriented, three-tier, client/server application utilizing Microsoft's SQL Server and NT. The data model, implemented on the SQL Server relational database, was designed with objects representing the key student loan entities (borrowers, schools, lenders, servicers, etc.). The business rules and edits are constructed utilizing object-oriented technology and database abstraction. This approach allows maximum efficiency in the use of data across the life of the loan and supports a far broader range of options for the exchange of data between ASA and its partners.

ASA constructed a graphical user interface (GUI) with Microsoft Visual C++ in a Windows desktop. This application provides ASA's administrative staff, operations, and customer service with complete access to all loan details through a single application. The reporting system was built with Microsoft Access to support all of ASA's reporting needs, including the generation of checks to be mailed to the students whose loans are approved.

The client component of the system performs the initial data edits as the user enters data into the application. Each transaction submitted by the user is processed fully for business accuracy and correctness in the middleware object layer. The middleware object layer is responsible for executing all business logic and ensuring both transaction and data integrity as each transaction is passed to the SQL Server on the back end or third tier.

Recently, a Web interface was developed using a blend of C++, COM, HTML, and XML components. The Web Client application allows ASA's clients to access and update their data by sending transactions via COM objects to the application server for execution. An ad-hoc reporting capability is also supported where report requests are generated in HTML real-time.

Technologies and Tools

- COM/DCOM
- HTML
- Microsoft Access
- Microsoft Internet Explorer
- Microsoft SQL Server
- Microsoft Visual Studio
- Microsoft Visual Studio (C++, SQL)
- Microsoft Windows
- Microsoft Windows NT Server

