

LANSA Case Study

LANSA underpins PartyLite's continuous international expansion

PartyLite Worldwide LLC is one of the fastest growing direct sales companies in the world. PartyLite's 45,000 independent sales consultants sell premium fragranced candles and a wide range of related decorative accessories to consumers through the home party plan method of direct selling. PartyLite operates in the US, Canada, Australia, Germany, the U.K. and a growing number of other countries in Europe.

PARTYLITE®

Because of innovative marketing strategies and expansion to overseas markets, PartyLite's revenues sky-rocketed during the 90's and continue to grow today. Throughout the years LANSA's productivity and multilingual facilities have helped PartyLite to rapidly deploy customized applications to overseas offices and keep up with the enormous operational expansion. Initially LANSA was selected for the development of various solutions complementing PartyLite's ERP, but eventually the ERP system itself was modernized and redeveloped in LANSA as well.

Deb Kane, manager application development at PartyLite, said, "The flexibility of LANSA has provided us with a key foundation for the continued relevance of our custom developed business systems. The ease of use of the LANSA platform enables our application developers to quickly and efficiently create and maintain business functions in response to ever-changing business needs."

The Challenge

Before implementing the many solutions that are now developed with LANSA, PartyLite used an ERP system with basic functionality, complemented by several solutions for forecasting, sales analysis and more. These peripheral solutions were fragmented, the manual procedures around it error prone and the downloads were time-consuming due to the sheer amount of data.

Rather than using generic query or reporting tools, PartyLite was looking for a more tailored approach. A custom solution that would be able to work directly with the ERP application and data. The solution also had to be real-time, not relying on batch queries or data-duplication.

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Another requirement was that the solution, to be developed by the North American office, would also be used by overseas offices. So, it needed to be flexible and accommodate for multiple languages.

Several development platforms were evaluated and Visual LANSA was selected.

Brian Turgeon, heading the North American IT development team at that time, said "Visual LANSA was easy to learn. Our ERP developers felt immediately familiar with it. We found the LANSA framework very productive in quickly establishing the skeleton of an application, and its high-level language very productive for customizing applications to our exact needs. LANSA's repository of reusable components is very powerful, allowing you to re-use the same logic consistently throughout your applications."

"LANSA has immediate connectivity with our ERP and the data it holds. There is no need for a middle layer. This cohesive integration was another compelling reason to go ahead with LANSA," continues Brian.

The Solution and Benefits

The Materials Management department was the first department to use Visual LANSA for its Inventory Forecasting and Sales Analysis applications. The system includes maintenance on basic data, such as currency conversion and calendar data, workbench analysis where



the user can view data by different dimensions, and query & reporting.

Ed Kalafarski, Materials Director at PartyLite, comments "We made a large leap forward. We only needed a few months to implement the solution and everything is working really well."

"Response times are rather impressive," says Brian. "Most queries include complex calculations, over data from multiple files that retain millions of records. On average the user gets a first page of information presented within just a few seconds. In that time the criteria have been validated, data is selected and processed, and the results are displayed."

"LANSA performs very well in demanding, large and international projects like ours. The applications keep up with the enormous growth in our volume of data and provide flexibility for the unique differences in policies, culture and language that we have to deal with."

Over the years the same forecasting and sales analysis solution has been implemented to PartyLite's European offices.

"The fact that we can roll out the same system in English, French and German, and that we can do this quickly, has helped us enormously in our globalization process," says Brian. "While maintaining a single set of source code, LANSA's multilingual facilities easily let us run the same application in additional language areas."

LANSA, the Natural Choice for All Development

Quite soon after the initial roll out of inventory forecasting and sales analysis, PartyLite's usage of LANSA expanded to also include credit card validation and XML-transacting with suppliers for drop shipping using LANSA Integrator.

When PartLite's core ERP solution itself needed to be improved, LANSA's low-code rapid application development platform was a natural choice. The first ERP module to be modernized was the customer service application

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used by the European offices. It was cumbersome to use and customer service reps felt slowed down by the rigid navigation between programs. They needed something faster to handle the calls from sales consultants.

Using LANSA's modernization tool (RAMP), PartyLite revamped its customer service ERP module, by consolidating multiple separate programs into a single application with easy to navigate tabs. Additional functionality was added as well, such as sorting and searching of products, consultants and orders, as well as integrated web access to track and trace parcels. It allowed customer service reps to give quick and accurate answers when consultants call about the status of their order.

Hartmut Vietzke, Application Manager for PartyLite's European operations, says, "Going through the RAMP modernization stage was helpful, because it let us improve productivity in our call centers very quickly. However, underneath the modernized navigation it still uses some of the old programs."

"Our goal is to redevelop our entire IBM i-based ERP solution with LANSA and become platform independent. Redevelopment with Visual LANSA Framework is extremely quick, in fact so quick that we don't see further need for RAMP modernization as an in between first stage. We have started redevelopment already and aim from a gradual module by module roll-out. The users are getting enthusiastic, resulting in better feedback to the IT team regarding what should be included in the next stage."

"With no previous web or Windows development skills, redevelopment of the customer service ERP module took about one man month (spread over three calendar months). We now feel very comfortable with Visual LANSA Framework and look forward to the next project," concludes Vietzke.

Company and System Information

- PartyLite Worldwide, LLC manufactures and distributes premium candles, flameless and home fragrance products, appliances, and home decor accessories. The company operates in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and other countries in Europe. It offers its products via in-home demonstrations through its network of 45,000 sales consultants operating in 23 countries. HQ is in Plymouth, Massachusetts. PartyLite operates as a subsidiary of Luminex Home Décor & Fragrance Holding Corporation.
- Integration with commercial software solutions include Kewill Warehouse Management System, Starsight Distribution and light Manufacturing (previously called Gemma)
- PartLite North America has approximately 300 users connected. The European offices have approximately 100 users, connecting to a central server.
- For more information see www.partylite.com



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