

Power Team Launches VizTrade

SYSTEM MIRRORS TRADE TRANSACTIONS

In the land of multi-tasking, Power Team's hourly transactors are kings.

They juggle dozens of details in their heads: numbers of megawatts, available transmission, market rules, price bids, accounting for deals and more.

A few years ago, they asked themselves if they could create a software application that would mirror what they do, and keep track of the details they needed to complete a transaction.

"We wanted it to document the moves we make each hour when buying and selling energy and then model that into a graphical bubble map that is smart and can prompt the trader through an hourly deal with minimal entry inputs," explained Power Team trader Walt Kuhn.

"A few of the traders in the early years of Power Team had a dream to be able to point and click to trade energy," recalled Joe MacCrory. The dream became reality in the form of VizTrade, Power Team's new transaction system.

About two years ago Power Team's Ron Swartz, Blake McLaughlin, George Barnes and MacCrory, plus a small group of developers and support people, joined forces to make MacCrory's dream a reality.

Swartz and McLaughlin, the IT brains and project leads, knew nothing like it existed in the marketplace. They also knew they could create it for less than any software consultant would charge.

With the help of Infragistics, a leader in software components that allowed them to create visual images of information, the team created an application that speeds transactions and in turn gives the company a competitive edge. In fact, its creators believe the system could pay for itself in as little as one day, because of its ability to allow for extra trades over the course of a day.

"From an industry standpoint, we are the best in delivering energy. Nobody does it better," McLaughlin said. VizTrade enhances that capability by adding speed, allowing them to complete a deal end-to-end in seconds.

"It gives us a competitive advantage in scheduling" the delivery, he said.

The application went into production in July and between 25 and 30 traders are now using it.

The development team agrees that the success of the application is due in large part to the incorporation of traders into the project team.

"They sat with us for six months and watched us conduct business," MacCrory said. "VizTrade is built on our work flow, so training is minimal."

And the traders credit Swartz and McLaughlin for "seeing the big picture" as well as the fine details.

"Ron did the most painstaking detail," down to hand-drawing storyboards for the system, MacCrory recalled.

"By partnering with Joe, George and other traders throughout the development process, we were able to leverage their expertise to create a highly integrated solution with the rules of the business embodied in the interface," Swartz said. "There's some real innovation in this product and what we did to make it happen."

Before VizTrade, traders relied on enormous Excel spreadsheets — "monstrosities," the traders say — to determine

that can be "exploded," or enlarged, to show details, and includes "bubbles" that indicate sales and purchases.

Because the system "does a lot of the thinking for you," it streamlines the learning process, Barnes noted.

"We had an 18-year-old intern who learned to schedule in half an hour. That was the coolest thing," he said.

The team also expects the system will easily adapt to meet the ever-changing rules of the electricity markets. Originally designed for hourly transactions, the application has been expanded to accommodate scheduling, next-day transactions and over-the-counter (via a broker) trades.

"It's not the same for even six months in a row," Barnes said of the market rules. "The key is to be able to evolve with the business." ⚡

transmission positions, and the traditional shouting across the trade floor to learn who other traders were talking to.

"It can be difficult to sift through all that information," said Barnes.

As the traders arranged deals, they also kept a step-by-step log of all the aspects of the transaction, then entered all the data at one time when all the details were in place.

VizTrade tracks, captures and records those details as the trader works.

And it does its work with strong graphics that include a map of all regions



VizTrade 1.0 product provides Power Team traders with a rich, visual environment for real-time power trading, including telephony interface, deal entry, scheduling, tagging, and transmission position management.