



Easy-to-use ActiveReports saves White Oak Resources time and money

Case Study



WHITE OAK RESOURCES

White Oak Resources, LLC

White Oak Resources is a privately held coal company headquartered in Hamilton County, Illinois.

Website

<http://www.whiteoakresources.com>

Industry

Coal Mining

Technologies Used

ActiveReports

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Tim Corbett

Senior Software Developer , White Oak Resources, LLC

Overview

When White Oak Resources, LLC began their search for an easy-to-use reporting solution for their intranet applications they weren't prepared for what they would uncover. “All of our applications were ASP.NET MVC3 applications and there seemed to be no simple reporting solution,” said Tim Corbett, senior software developer at White Oak Resources, LLC.

“We were looking for something that would be easily programmable, which would allow our team to preview the report during development,” said Corbett. “From experience, working on any web application may become cumbersome when you are required to display the app in a web page and then select the report to preview. We concluded that we needed a solution that is able to develop and preview the app without displaying in a browser.”

Project Requirements

The trend of users viewing applications from multiple devices holds true for users of White Oak Resources, LLC reports as well. Whether viewing from a PC, iPad, or similar touch device, the reports needed to be capable of being displayed in multiple environments. There are also known limitations of each environment in terms of technology support, such as Flash, Silverlight, and ActiveX, so the end solutions needed to be built in HTML or PDF format.

Considerations

The company first considered the reporting solution built into Microsoft Visual Studio 2010; however, they opted not to use it based on the IDE's dependency on SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS) to create a preview mode. “Since we are not using SSRS we would be stuck in the normal viewer and have to compile and browse the app every time we wanted to check our development process,” said Corbett.

Rediscovery

Taking another look at the requirements for the project and recalling past positive product experiences with ComponentOne ActiveReports, Corbett began to realize that ActiveReports would be a good fit. “Using the Report designer in ActiveReports, we can develop and preview our reports in the IDE without compiling the app then viewing it in a browser,” said Corbett. “Active Reports also has a great set of export options for us to use. Since we need to run on iPads and PC desktops, we will be displaying all reports as PDFs. Also, we can quickly and easily export reports to Excel.”



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Benefits

As the project got underway, White Oak Resources began to appreciate the simple access and design-time preview found in ActiveReports. “This definitely saves us many hours developing reports,” said Corbett. “Now with ActiveReports, report layouts are simple to design and easy to modify, and we can add events and share between projects if needed. I can even make a dynamic link library (DLL) of common reports to share between many applications.”

The export options are another key feature of ActiveReports. The wide range of export options make it possible to easily create PDF-rendered reports that can be displayed on both PCs and iPads. “I can easily create PDF-rendered reports that will display on both PCs and iPads,” said Corbett. “By creating PDF reports, I do not need a Web Viewer control. Instead, we created a simple Report Library that renders a PDF Report as an ActionResult. This enables us to request reports with only having to worry about the report name, location, and parameters. We don’t even have to mix the MVC and ASP environments, thus enabling our apps to be native MVC apps only.”

Time Savings

One of the benefits White Oak Resources, LLC realized immediately was the time saved while developing reports. “With the IDE Preview, we can develop reports faster and even create them outside of the main project,” said Corbett. “We estimate that we saved two to four man hours per report by using ActiveReports.”

Cost Savings

No longer did the company have to create two separate apps for their users. “Our team can concentrate on creating the main app that works on PCs and iPads,” said Corbett.

“By not having to divide our resources to write separate apps, we calculate savings in the thousands of dollars.”

Tim Corbett

Senior Software Developer , White Oak Resources, LLC

About ActiveReports

ActiveReports joined the ComponentOne product line on July 1, 2012, when ComponentOne became a division of GrapeCity. The award-winning .NET reporting tool for Silverlight, Windows Forms, ASP.NET, and Windows Azure brings Microsoft .NET developers everything from familiar Visual Studio integrated designers to extensive APIs. Create reports ranging in functionality from form-based reports such as invoices and insurance documents, to transaction reports such as sales and accounting, to analytical reports such as sales and budget analysis and portfolio analysis.

About White Oak Resources, LLC

White Oak Resources LLC is a privately held coal company headquartered in Hamilton County, Illinois. Formed in 2006, White Oak has access to over 1.3 billion tons of recoverable coal reserves in Hamilton County. White Oak’s senior management team has extensive experience with many large, diversified operators in the Illinois Basin and world-wide.



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