



Overview

Country or Region: United States
Industry: IT services

Partner Profile

Gold Systems, founded in 1991, creates voice-automation solutions for companies in a range of industries. Named to the Inc. 500 and the Deloitte & Touche Fast 50, the company has 75 employees.

Business Situation

The company wanted to enhance its password-reset application to help its customers to meet tighter security requirements and to reduce help-desk calls related to lost or forgotten passwords.

Solution

Gold Systems created a new version of its speech-based automated password-reset application by using Microsoft® Office Communications Server 2007 and Microsoft Speech Server 2007.

Benefits

- Offers flexible development environment
- Integrates fully with IT infrastructures
- Eases burden on IT administrators
- Helps to reduce costs
- Enhances security

Voice-Based Password-Reset Solution Boosts Security, Saves Time and Money

“Office Communications Server 2007 with Speech Server is the best interactive voice response-development platform I’ve ever worked on.”

Don Gau, Senior Developer, Gold Systems

Colorado-based Gold Systems creates voice-based software solutions that help enterprise customers to achieve regulatory compliance through automated processes. Some of the company’s security-focused customers required a solution that would help reduce the number of help-desk calls for forgotten or misplaced employee passwords. To help meet these business needs, Gold Systems, a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, used Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 with Microsoft Speech Server 2007 to develop a new version of its automated password-reset application. With this flexible development environment, the company’s developers were able to quickly build an enhanced application that integrates well with customers’ IT environments. The new solution also makes IT administration simpler, reduces costs, and provides employees with a more secure, simple way to reset their passwords.

Situation

Gold Systems, a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner based in Boulder, Colorado, develops voice-powered, self-service software solutions for companies in a variety of industries including financial services and healthcare. The organization's solutions use speech recognition and interactive voice response (IVR) technology and are designed to help customers to reduce operational costs by automating labor-intensive tasks and consolidating hardware and software.

Gold Systems builds its solutions on Microsoft technology, such as Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007. The organization integrates Microsoft software with customers' telephony infrastructures, including Private Branch Exchange (PBX) phone systems, voice over IP (VoIP) services, and mobile devices. Since its inception in 1991, Gold Systems software has automated more than one billion calls around the world.

For the past several years, a growing number of Gold Systems customers have experienced business challenges around system security—specifically the resetting of employee passwords. “This is a huge burden on help desks in organizations of all sizes because it takes up a lot of time,” says Jeff Krevitt, Director of Marketing at Gold Systems. “IT managers should be working on more value-added tasks, instead of taking phone calls from employees who have misplaced their passwords.” Cost is another factor. “Our statistics show that the typical enterprise spends an average of U.S.\$250 per worker each year on password management issues,” relates Krevitt. “So for some companies, the annual costs for password management can exceed \$750,000 a year.”

Most of these customers are dealing with increased security and regulatory compliance requirements. For example, one Gold Systems customer, a large multinational

financial institution that has more than 100,000 employees, has to be vigilant about protecting its banking customers' financial information. “The big fear is that outsiders could steal employee password information and gain access to banking records or to money,” says Matt Jacobs, Project Manager at Gold Systems. However, the bank used a manually operated help-desk system through which employees who sought new passwords had to speak to a live person. This process could be time-consuming for employees and IT administrators alike, and was less secure than an automated solution.

Another Gold Systems customer, a major global pharmaceutical firm, was struggling with similar security concerns. Because it needed to protect its proprietary research data and other private drug information, the company recently decided to have employees change their passwords every 45 days, as opposed to the previous 90-day requirement. Faced with this change, employees were losing or forgetting passwords at a higher rate than before. “It was heavily affecting the organization's help desk,” says Cameron Reid, Sales Manager at Gold Systems. “About 50 percent of their help-desk calls were related to password resetting.”

For both of these customers, productivity for employees and IT staff members was suffering. “When a third of your help-desk calls are spent on password issues, a lot of time is wasted,” says Krevitt. “These customers both needed to give their IT personnel more time to spend on regular system troubleshooting and other important issues, and they wanted their workers to spend less time worrying about this issue.”

Solution

Several years ago, Gold Systems had developed an automated password-reset application called Gold Systems Password Reset. That speech recognition-driven IVR

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application, based on Microsoft Speech Server 2004 R2, helped customers to securely manage help-desk password reset calls in an automated fashion.

In early 2007, Gold Systems decided to create a new version of Password Reset that takes advantage of Office Communications Server 2007, which features Microsoft Speech Server 2007. Speech Server 2007 combines speech technologies, VoIP, and telephony functionality into one integrated development system. Gold Systems was interested in the fact that Speech Server 2007 contains activities for telephony and speech applications, based on Windows® Workflow Foundation, which help developers to simplify the process of writing speech-based applications.

Speech Server 2007 also features a graphical IVR application development environment, within the Microsoft Visual Studio® 2005 development system, called the Voice Response Workflow Designer. The Voice Response Workflow Designer is also based on the Windows Workflow Foundation, which is part of the Microsoft .NET Framework version 3.0. “The development tools and workflows of Speech Server 2007 were important for us,” says Don Gau, Senior Developer at Gold Systems. “We knew that those features would help us bring a lot of value to our application.”

By using Speech Server 2007, Gold Systems developed an enhanced version of Password Reset, which it launched in late 2007. This voice-powered solution now features an automated “anywhere, anytime” user interface and simplified reset functionality. The solution’s users call in to reset their passwords, and the entire process is driven by self-service voice technology that is based on Speech Server. “It’s basically a virtual help desk that can handle password reset requests 24 hours a day, seven days a

week,” says Krevitt. “When an employee misplaces or forgets a password, they call in to the application or use the secure Web-based interface to automatically get their new password.”

Because it was developed using Office Communications Server 2007, Gold Systems Password Reset integrates fully with many companies’ existing IT environments. For example, the software can automatically update all passwords that are managed by the Active Directory® service. “If a company has already deployed Office Communications Server 2007 with Speech Server 2007, Password Reset can be built right onto that system, with no additional telephony hardware needed,” adds Krevitt.

In September 2008, Gold Systems helped its financial services customer to implement Office Communications Server 2007 and Password Reset. It initially installed both to a group of 500 bank employees and has plans to deploy both technologies to all employees. Also in the fall of 2008, Gold Systems assisted its pharmaceutical customer in implementing Password Reset.

Benefits

Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 with Microsoft Speech Server 2007 gives Gold Systems a highly flexible development environment, which the company used to easily create the new version of its Password Reset application. The solution integrates tightly with Gold Systems customers’ existing IT environments and eases the work of IT administrators. It also lowers these customers’ operating costs and gives their employees a more secure, simple-to-operate application.

Offers a Simple, Flexible Development Environment

With Office Communications Server 2007 and Speech Server 2007, Gold Systems has

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a flexible development environment that provides built-in tools such as the Voice Response Workflow Designer based on the Windows Workflow Foundation, the Conversational Grammar Builder, and state-of-the-art speech technology—all at no extra cost. Gold Systems developers used these tools to easily and quickly create the new version of Password Reset. “Office Communications Server 2007 with Speech Server is the best interactive voice response-development platform I’ve ever worked on,” says Don Gau, Senior Developer at Gold Systems. “The workflow tools made it very easy for us to write out how the call flow is designed in the application. The speech tools simplify the development of natural language applications to simply writing down the expected answers. All of this makes it a lot easier and less time-consuming than any other environment I’ve worked in.”

Speech Server 2007 also gives Gold Systems developers the flexibility they need to be able to customize Password Reset for customers. The company’s bank customer, for example, needed to be able to route calls from Password Reset back to a live help desk in case employees needed additional assistance. “Because Office Communications Server 2007 with Speech Server is so flexible, we were able to meet that requirement and write code that gives the bank a solution that can route calls in a specific geographic area based on the caller’s area code,” says Gau.

Integrates Fully with IT Infrastructures

The new version of Password Reset also integrates tightly with Gold Systems customers’ existing IT environments, which made deployment a simple process for both the bank and the pharmaceutical company. The pharmaceutical company was already using Office Communications Server 2007, and Password Reset integrated seamlessly with the company’s Active Directory service,

databases, and phone system. “Their developers were impressed that Speech Server was an integral part of Office Communications Server 2007, so that it could easily integrate into an already deployed enterprise solution for them, which makes scalability easier,” says Reid.

Integration was also critical for the Gold Systems bank customer, which needed Password Reset to integrate with its existing Windows BitLocker™ Drive Encryption technology. “Our financial services customer made it clear that our application needed to work alongside BitLocker Drive Encryption, which they use to encrypt all communications,” says Reid. “Security was a main focus for them, and the integration made it easier for them to decide to go with our application.”

Eases Burden on IT Administrators

Password Reset features Web-based administration capabilities that are easy to set up and manage. IT managers can choose the number of enrollment questions, for example, and can configure security questions, set a temporary password activation period, provide access information for Active Directory settings, and monitor application performance. “The new Password Reset gives IT administrators the ability to remove routine, manual, time-consuming password reset tasks from their work day so that they can address troubleshooting, strategic initiatives, and more significant business issues,” says Reid.

Because it is simple to apply and administer, Password Reset is already helping Gold Systems customers to reduce the amount of time that they spend on help-desk calls. “Our pharmaceutical customer has been able to cut close to 60 percent of its help-desk calls related to lost passwords,” says Reid. “That’s a big decline in the amount of work that its IT

people need to do now, and that frees them up to work on other projects.”

Helps to Reduce Costs

The fact that Password Reset was created by using Office Communications Server 2007 means that Gold Systems customers can build on a very cost-effective platform. All of the components that are needed for a sophisticated speech technology-enabled solution are included, without extra charge. “We have done Password Reset deployments where the return on investment is realized in only a few months,” remarks Krevitt. “Even though Office Communications Server 2007 can stand on its own in terms of cost savings and unified communications features, Password Reset can add value to Office Communications Server 2007 implementations.”

The Gold Systems pharmaceutical customer, in fact, was able to implement Password Reset at a considerable savings compared with competitive password applications. “Our pharmaceutical customer did not have to worry about licensing costs with a third-party application, because of how Password Reset integrates with their Office Communications Server 2007 infrastructure,” says Krevitt. “And the integration also made the deployment go more smoothly, which kept deployment costs low.”

Enhances Security, Provides Easy-to-Use Application

For Gold Systems customers who are concerned about security issues, Password Reset provides enhanced security capabilities that can help them to better comply with industry regulatory requirements. Password Reset helps to ensure high levels of security and a traceable audit trail through enforcement of stronger passwords and the encryption of authentication questions and answers. “We also improved our customers’ security because they don’t have to have a

live person giving out new passwords,” adds Krevitt.

The application is also easy for employees to use. They simply enroll over the Web by answering several challenge questions. For a speaker verification option, users create a “voiceprint” over the phone. “Because of these features, employee enrollment is very quick,” says Krevitt. “It is very convenient for them to use, and it’s also easy for IT staff members to implement and manage.”

For More Information

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Software and Services

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