

***ProLifics.***

# A SIMPLE FIRST SOLUTION CLEARS THE ROAD FOR THIS FREIGHT COMPANY

Our Client

Challenge - Who remembers Visual Basic?

Action and Result - A simple solution makes a world of difference.



## Our Client

This large shipping company (LSC) provides domestic freight and import/export services in six U.S. states. They became our client based the successful solutions and services we provided to their sister company throughout a continuing long-term relationship.

## Challenge – Who remembers Visual Basic?

LSC's business and tech challenges are rooted in what happened before they were "large" – that is, as a small freight company operating in one state, more than 10 years ago. This small company's operational books and records were all run on one application, written in Visual Basic (VB), a programming language built by Microsoft. The company housed the application on a local, on-prem computer connected to a local Microsoft SQL database server – as a desktop tower system.

When the company expanded into a new state, the application was merely copied over to the new office's local, on-prem computer connected to a local Microsoft SQL database server. The copied application was tweaked for the new location's specific considerations, like tax rates and freight regulations. This scenario repeated itself as LSC grew, until it found itself in six states with six separate applications on siloed, unconnected hardware.

The problems this created are, unfortunately, both common and obvious:

- Management could not get a whole company view – each office had to run reports or copy data and send it back and forth
- Security, stability and scalability of six siloed systems was suspect. A power-outage or computer crash meant lost business
- Data back-up had to be done manually

When LSC first came to us, their main concern was bullet point one above – a way to centralize their databases. We made LSC a two-stage proposal.



# Action and Result – A simple solution makes a world of difference.

Our stage one action was to take the six databases that were in the separate states and repost them onto Microsoft's Azure cloud. This was LSC's first foray into cloud platforms. We made sure the security in the cloud was set up appropriately for them, so database access was restricted as needed. We helped them set up their connectivity so that their local VB applications, running on their local desktops, would connect through secure tunnels through the cloud and get the data they needed. That is, the VB application still ran locally in each of the six branches, but instead of talking to a local database, they all talked to their own database running in Azure cloud.

This simple "lift and drop" of the databases from the offices to the Azure cloud gave LSC a number of immediate, important benefits. Andy Blank is Prolifics' Head of Technical Sales, North America, and works with LSC. "All of their data was backed up. It was centrally accessible," said Blank. "They could run reports across all of it and get a consistent view of their database – knowing their data was secure in the cloud. This first phase was very successful and LSC loved the results of that. It was simple, but it was simply the right first thing to do from a modern IT perspective."

Next steps – proposed stage two

Stage two is to modernize the VB application and merge all of the databases. The result would be a single centralized application, using a single database, applying logic to help run the state offices. This will include:

- Implementing a holistic approach with cloud-native design patterns
- Implementing Azure DevOps dashboards and pipelines for day-to-day work
- Creating a reporting operational data store
- Using Microsoft Azure Data Factory for ETL (extract, transfer, load) processes
- Integrating with Microsoft Power BI (business intelligence)

This next phase will help LSC provide faster quotes, more accurate invoicing, and data-informed marketing decisions.



# ***Prolifics***

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