

Expert documentation helps client preserve large investment in critical client application

VMS creates detailed docs for a 120-screen application used by tens of millions

Customer Challenge

A major financial services firm in Jersey City, New Jersey, faced an immediate need to document the screens and workflow of its flagship client interface system. The application is used by more than 20 million investors to manage their portfolio positions. Users can administer their accounts in a self-service manner. They can buy or sell their share positions, monitor and maintain their accounts, enroll in stock purchase or dividend reinvestment plans, and request forms and materials about a company's plans.

Time was a critical factor that added risk to the project. Upcoming personnel changes at the financial services firm would reduce available expertise on the system and the skills required to produce the documentation. In addition, much of the firm's technical maintenance was moving to offshore resources, requiring a transfer of knowledge on the features and functions of the system.

VMS Solution

The financial services firm chose VMS to produce comprehensive documentation for the shareowner system. One of the reasons VMS was selected was that its people were familiar with the system and had participated in previous quality assurance (Q/A) projects for earlier releases. VMS also offered hard-to-find expertise about how technology is deployed and used in the financial services market.

A VMS project team managed the complex task of documenting 120 application screens, producing a series of documents, one for each screen. Completed documents were shared immediately with management, allowing fast review and approval. Thanks to the expertise and diligence of VMS, very few edits were required on the first draft.

Each screen document VMS produced followed the same format and contained:

- A description of the screen and its uses
- How a user navigates to and from the screen

Executive Summary

Challenge

- Document a 120-screen shareowner application
- Finish the project before internal experts left company
- Create re-usable training and Q/A testing materials

VMS Solution

- A VMS project team with expertise in the application
- Comprehensive documentation for each application screen
- A process to review and approve documents quickly

Results

- Preservation of application knowledge inside the client firm
- Up-to-date training and testing materials
- Increased efficiency and faster application development
- Better application performance through bug fixes
- Cost savings due to VMS experience and expertise



- All boilerplate text on the screen, its source and any data dependencies that produce slightly different variants of this text
- The source of all data on the screen
- User input(s) on the screen
- Validations for all user input, and the source and timing of the validations
- Functions that are data dependent, such as a link that only appears under certain circumstances
- A screenshot of each variant of a screen, its fields and boilerplate text
- Listings and/or screenshots of all status and error messages, with a description of the circumstances that produced the message, its meaning, and, for error messages, how to correct the error
- Screenshots showing custom screens for specific clients

Customer Benefits

Preservation of corporate knowledge. One of the client's biggest concerns was retaining in-house expertise on the system because internal experts were retiring, and other technical maintenance was moving offshore. VMS provided a comprehensive resource that could not only document the software, but also train product managers and others who required knowledge of the system.

Efficiency gains and time savings. The documentation allows new product managers, help desk personnel, and others to get up to speed quickly, without a steep learning curve on the system.

Faster development and testing. With three or four releases of the application coming every year, including new screens or customizations for individual clients, the documentation VMS produced allows developers and testers to know exactly how the application should respond on every screen. This helps speed development by isolating application errors.

Improved application performance. During its documentation efforts, the VMS project team uncovered several bugs in the system, which were subsequently addressed to improve application performance.

About VMS

Founded in 2002, VMS, Inc. (Virtual Management Solutions) offers a specialized portfolio of consulting services worldwide. We are owned and operated by an executive team with a reputation for excellence and integrity in the financial services industry. Because of our exclusive focus on financial services and dedication to personal service, we are able to work with clients quickly and expertly to deliver technology requirements, business models, and management practices, as well as complete project management—from planning and methodology, to execution, staffing, documentation, quality assurance testing, and training.

For more information, visit www.vmsconsulting.com.
Email info@vmsconsulting.com
or call 201-460-1610.

VMS, Inc.
Harborside Financial Center
2500 Plaza 5
Jersey City, NJ 07311