

Flashvue Revolutionizes Recruiting Process with .NET-Connected System

Avanade Skills and Experience Help Create a Powerful Web-Based Video Recruitment Tool

Flashvue Video Solutions combines advanced technology with the power of the Web to deliver video interviews and profiles of job candidates securely to corporations, recruiting firms, universities, and outplacement agencies. Avanade helped Flashvue adapt to rapidly changing business conditions and get its product to market quickly.



▲COMPANY DESCRIPTION: Flashvue Video Solutions was founded in 2004 to create and market leading edge Web-based recruitment technologies to the public and private sectors.

▶ SNAPSHOT

Industry	Services	Team	18 from Avanade, 2 from customer	Avanade Assets	ACA® .NET
Geography	United States	Size	11 full-time employees		Avanade Connected Methods
Partnerships	Avanade TCS HQ Global Workplaces	Solution Summary	Flashvue worked with Avanade architects and developers to create its flagship product: a secure, Web-based video recruitment tool.		Avanade Development Architecture
Technology	Microsoft® .NET Framework				.NET Estimating Tool

Customer Background

Flashvue Video Solutions

Hank Fichtner founded Flashvue Video Solutions in 2004 to create a new high-tech product that he first envisioned while a student at Lafayette College. As one of many soon-to-be graduates lining up job interviews, Fichtner decided to enhance his résumé by including a recorded video profile on CD. The short video clip would show potential employers his communication skills, presentation abilities, and personality.

He quickly saw a potential business opportunity in creating video résumés for others by turning the components of the small recording studio he'd created in his dormitory room into a video recruitment kiosk that could be installed in career centers at colleges and universities. The kiosk would be equipped with a computer and a video camera. A user could record a video profile and send the profile with his or her résumé to potential employers through the Web.

Fichtner discussed his idea with fellow Lafayette College alumnus Hal Kamine, a successful entrepreneur and chairman of Kamine Development Corporation. Knowing in advance the highly technical nature of the proposed system, Kamine invited his friend Bill Harrison, Regional Business Development Director of Avanade, to the meeting. After hearing Fichtner's proposal, Kamine agreed to provide financial backing for the new business, and together they created Flashvue Video Solutions. Kamine also used his extensive business experience to assemble a skilled management staff that includes technology, operations, sales, marketing, and business development experts.

Business Challenge

Creating a new high-tech product to revolutionize recruiting

Flashvue wanted to bring its innovative product to market as quickly as possible to maximize the return on its investment. The company sought a technology partner to design a robust software architecture that would help it speed the development of the product and ensure the security of the confidential information being transmitted over the Internet.

Robert Green, Chief Technology Officer of Flashvue, says, "Originally, we were not looking for someone to develop the application. We planned to bring Avanade our conceptual design, have them do the architecture for us, and then we would handle the development internally. As we talked to Avanade, though, we saw that the resources it offered in terms of development, implementation, and ongoing support could add a lot of value to what we were doing from both a business and a technology perspective."

Microsoft .NET Framework speeds time to market

Flashvue was interested from the beginning in using Microsoft® technology to build the new application's components. "Our experience has been that the compatibility between different Microsoft products, and the look and functionality they share, speed the time to market for new applications," says Green. "When Avanade recommended that we use the .NET Framework as a development base, it solidified that decision."

Harrison brought in a senior architect from Avanade to perform an initial estimate of the project cost using the Avanade .NET Estimating Tool. Four months later, a three-person group of Avanade technologists worked with Green and members of the Flashvue

▶ QUOTE

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technical staff for three weeks to determine the requirements and budget for the new system and plan the software development cycle. Flashvue approved the budget and the group immediately began a rapid development phase to build the first release of the Flashvue video recruitment system, known as the “collegiate model.”

Development begins on the new product

Robert Green of Flashvue and Rajesh Kulkarni of Avanade acted as lead architects, with Kulkarni managing the Avanade side of the project. The development group they led consisted of approximately 20 people, the number varying during different phases of the project. Two developers worked on the audio and video streaming technology; two others created the digital rights management component; another created the video capture and compression algorithms; and a small group of developers designed a Web-based graphical user interface.

The challenge of digital rights management

One challenge of the project was the need for digital rights management (DRM). The developers had to work out a way that customers could download a video profile but only view it a certain number of times before it expired. “Digital rights management is a fairly recent technology, and there aren’t a lot of experts on it yet,” says Kulkarni. “Because of our aggressive schedule, we didn’t have time to get someone from the outside to help us—our people had to become DRM experts on their own.”

Quickly adapting to an evolving business plan

The collegiate model was designed for the customer base that Fichtner originally envisioned: college students entering the job market for the first time. Job candidates would use kiosks located at their schools to upload their video profiles and résumés to a Web site that employers would search to find potential employees. Shortly before development of this release was finished, however, the company made a change to its business plan. Analysis of the market led Flashvue to shift its focus from students as the primary users of the system toward recruiting, executive placement, and outsourcing companies.

This represented a significant change in the software architecture. The original plan called for a full-function, self-contained product in which candidate profiles were made available to businesses on a hosted, public, job search Web site. The system was now envisioned as an add-on to existing operations of recruiters. Some elements, such as the kiosks, would remain in a modified form, but others would be discarded in favor of other ways of interacting with customers and the clients they serve.

When Flashvue adjusted its business plan, the collegiate model of the software was almost complete. Avanade determined that the most efficient response to the new development requirements in terms of time, effort, and money would be to reuse much of the collegiate model’s architecture and software components. The project managers assigned half of the group to continue development and testing of the first release while the other half split off to perform a short envisioning exercise for the new application.

Scott Rifkin, Project Manager at Avanade, says, “Through our testing and the envisioning exercise, we found that we could reuse 70 to 80 percent of the kiosk application’s architecture and a lot of components of the Web application. This enabled us to keep up our fast pace of development and preserve the investment Flashvue had made in the software we’d already created.”

The Solution

The Flashvue video recruitment system

The Flashvue video recruitment system went live at the beginning of June 2005, giving executive recruiting firms and outplacement agencies a powerful resource to complement their existing evaluation and hiring systems. These companies use Flashvue kiosks as recruiting points for their customers’ job postings. Job candidates use the kiosks, which are equipped with video and audio recording



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equipment and computers running Microsoft Windows® XP Professional, to record a video profile introducing themselves to potential employers. They may also participate in a recorded job interview, answering questions displayed to them on a teleprompter.

The completed profile is uploaded by secure FTP to servers at Flashvue and made available within minutes to Flashvue customers on the Web. DRM services help ensure the security of the information by limiting the number of times a profile can be viewed, and restricting the number of copies that can be e-mailed. Customers combine the view of the candidate gained from Flashvue with the information collected using their own recruiting processes to thoroughly screen potential job candidates. They then forward the ones they feel are most suitable for a given position to their own customers: the companies doing the hiring. Flashvue uses a corporate billing model for payment, with customers paying for minutes used on the system.

The application was created using the Avanade Connected Architecture® for .NET (ACA® .NET) software tool and built on a foundation of Microsoft integrated technology:

- ⇒ Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2004 helps secure the Flashvue network perimeter.
- ⇒ Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003 Service Pack 1 provides a reliable, scalable, and secure software platform.
- ⇒ Microsoft Windows Rights Management Services for Windows Server 2003 uses licensing and copy protection to help prevent the unauthorized use of videos.
- ⇒ Windows Media® Encoder 9 Series provides DRM protection while recording, encoding, and encrypting video content.

Avanade value

Avanade drew on the experience and expertise of its developers as well as its internal management resources to help Flashvue reach its goals. Avanade worked closely with the company's IT organization throughout the development process to produce a fast, efficient, adaptable project group.

"I was onsite at Avanade at least once a week, sometimes for a couple of days at a time. It was very important that I meet the staff and that they work well with the staff at Flashvue," says Green. Avanade continues to work with Flashvue, providing ongoing support and management of the system.

Creative, dedicated people

Flashvue has to be able to change direction quickly to meet changing market needs. This means that its software development efforts also have to shift direction rapidly along with the company's business model. "That was our biggest challenge with this project," says Green. "How do you take a product development group of 20 people who are all running north at top speed and have them make a sudden turn west without losing their focus?"

Capato points out the commitment Avanade showed to the project. "The staff at Avanade showed a lot of dedication and put in a lot of long hours and hard work," Capato says. "Their commitment to the project and their ability to think outside the box really made a difference."

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Internal project management

The staffing resources within Avanade enabled it to rapidly create a development organization tailored to meet the specific needs of the Flashvue project. It also had the ability to manage that organization using its own internal project management structure and methodology. "Avanade had a core overview of the project that it maintained with high-level checks and balances and regular reviews," says Green. "Those are the kinds of things you want when you're developing a product that's being rolled out on a national or even a global level."

Deep knowledge of the development life cycle

Flashvue reports that Avanade brought much more to the project than software programming ability. "We could have found anybody to just write a program for us," says Green. "Avanade brought knowledge of how things should be done in a development life cycle in order to produce a product that is efficient and marketable. For example, because we have a relatively small IT shop, we don't have the large facilities for software testing that a Fortune 100 corporation has. So we put a lot of effort into design at the very beginning, which resulted in very smooth and straightforward testing later on."

Powerful development tools

Green says that using ACA.NET helped Flashvue meet its goal of a short development cycle. "ACA.NET gave us a framework that we could use both on the business side and the technical side," says Green. "We utilized its preexisting code for our application security and login infrastructure, and for providing some of the basic .NET classes that were used in development. It made the development phase a lot faster because we didn't have to invent a lot of those processes ourselves."

Results

Flashvue kiosks now sit in 35 locations across the United States. A wide variety of businesses have asked to see the recruitment system in action, including major airline companies and brokerage houses. Flashvue has received so many of these requests that its sales staff is booked weeks into the future for onsite demonstrations. Since the original project ended, Flashvue has developed more offerings to complement its video profiles and question-and-answer interviews. These include interview training using interactive video and a complete job portal on the Web.

The Avanade-led project group overcame the obstacles of time and changing business requirements to bring the Flashvue product in on schedule and under budget:

- The budget for the collegiate version was U.S.\$613,000. Avanade delivered it in two and a half months for \$600,000.
- The budget for the corporate recruiting version was \$630,000. Avanade delivered it in two months for \$606,000.

Thomas Capato, CEO of Flashvue, says, "The biggest value proposition for corporate customers is the ability to capture what we refer to as the 'behavioral DNA' of a candidate. A typical résumé only contains two-thirds of what you want to know about candidates: their education and their experience. Until you bring them in for interviews you don't get to see the remaining one-third: their people skills, their personality, their presentation capabilities, their communication skills.

"When you use the Flashvue product to put that behavioral DNA into a profile along with the educational and work experience, you get a more complete picture of the candidate. Once you have that, you can make a more informed decision about moving forward with the interviewing process. This saves our customers a lot of time and money."



Flashvue Customer: ECMG

The Evolutionary Career Marketing Group (ECMG) markets top professionals as potential job candidates to corporate hiring managers by creating comprehensive digital portfolios for its clients. These portfolios include items such as biographies, slideshow presentations, and published articles about clients' accomplishments. Recently, ECMG added the Flashvue video recruitment system to the array of materials it uses.

Laurie Pehar Borsh, Founder and CEO of ECMG, says, "Executive job candidates don't have the time to do all the things that are necessary to get noticed in the current job market. It goes beyond just writing a good résumé to creating an image and a brand for yourself that sets you apart from the hundreds of other professionals who are applying for the same position. Flashvue is a great image-building tool for our clients."

When a client chooses to create a video presentation as part of his or her portfolio, ECMG writes a three-minute script based on biography, prior experience, and personal success stories. ECMG then schedules a session for the client at a Flashvue kiosk location near the client's home, workplace, or an upcoming travel destination. The client can record up to three versions of the presentation during the appointment. ECMG can easily arrange to edit or re-record the video afterward, if the client wants to do so.

Once the client has finished recording the video, ECMG receives a link to the video through e-mail. ECMG includes that link in the client's digital portfolio, which is hosted on the ECMG Web site. By clicking on the link, the user is taken to the Flashvue Web portal. After the user accepts the legal agreement required to view the video, the presentation opens on the computer screen in Windows Media® Player 9 Series.

Prospective clients who choose not to sign an agreement with ECMG can still purchase their own three-minute Flashvue video presentation through the company for a fee. If they decide to become ECMG clients at a later date, that fee is applied and credited to the normal ECMG client account fees.

Pehar Borsh says that in addition to the value it brings to the image-building aspect of an executive job search, the system provides another benefit for ECMG clients. "Nearly all of my clients previously found jobs through networking and word of mouth, so they haven't done an interview in a long time. Viewing the presentation they created gives them a chance to watch themselves on camera and see how they come across during an interview, and make improvements."

ECMG anticipates that the presence of a video profile will greatly increase its clients' marketability and also help the hiring managers they work with make better hiring decisions faster. The company's ability to provide a comprehensive packet of information on its clients has led to successful relationships with companies ranging from Fortune 500 businesses to small executive placement firms.

"There are a lot of companies out there that we're compared to, but no one does it like we do," says Pehar Borsh.

About Avanade

Avanade is the leading technology integrator specializing in the Microsoft enterprise platform. Our people help customers around the world maximize their IT investment and create comprehensive solutions that drive business results. For more information about our services, please visit <http://www.avanade.com>.



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