

Future Processing

CASE STUDY



STEAMSHIP MUTUAL



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 www.steamshipmutual.com

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INTRODUCTION

In this case study we explore the cooperation of Future Processing with Steamship Mutual, one of the largest and most diverse Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Clubs in the world with over 9,000 ships covered by their insurance.

First, we look at the problem Steamship Mutual faced and the solutions that Future Processing were able to provide. This is followed by a reflection on the outcomes of this collaboration and a look at the plans for the future. Finally, we ask the client themselves for their views on our collaboration which started in 2008.

ABOUT THE CLIENT

Steamship Mutual is one of the largest and most diverse Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Clubs in the world and a member of the International Group of P&I Clubs participating in the International Group Pool.

Currently Steamship Mutual insure more than 9,000 ships of every possible kind and their club members come from more than 50 countries.

Steamship Mutual's aim is to provide a comprehensive P&I service backed by sound underwriting and strong reserves. Club members remain at the centre of their business as Steamship strives to offer the best advice and support wherever they are in the world.

Steamship Mutual and Future Processing have been working together since 2008 on a range of projects.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

Steamship Mutual's IT department found that supporting several applications of business-critical importance (e.g. maintaining their core insurance system) was becoming increasingly difficult and costly.

The reason for this was a rapidly declining resource pool and the inability to maintain the old programming code – PowerBuilder – that the applications were originally written in.

To alleviate the risk to the business, Steamship identified a need to migrate the applications to the .NET platform that their more recent applications were written in.

The migration work was a large programme and we simply didn't have enough developers in-house. We were impressed with the work that Future Processing had done so far. Future Processing was not just an obvious, but also a convenient choice for us.

MIKE POOLE

IT Business Systems Manager

FUTURE PROCESSING'S ROLE

The project discussed here was a very technically complex task as working with such a large programme presents many challenges.

The old PowerBuilder code was difficult to read, the procedures and business logic behind the code were highly complex and had evolved. In addition to this, there was limited documentation and the programmers who wrote the original code were no longer working at Steamship. It soon became clear to us that with this code as our main guide, the migration will require meticulous work, involving many developers.

We decided to address all of these issues by dealing with one application at a time, breaking work into three week iterations. Thanks to this approach, we were also able to grow and shrink our team from anywhere between 9 and 38 people as required.

Future Processing has such a large pool of highly-skilled and hard-working IT staff that whatever challenge we have thrown at them so far, they have completed successfully and with great attention to detail. We enjoy working with them and I expect we will continue to do so for a long time.

MIKE POOLE

IT Business Systems Manager

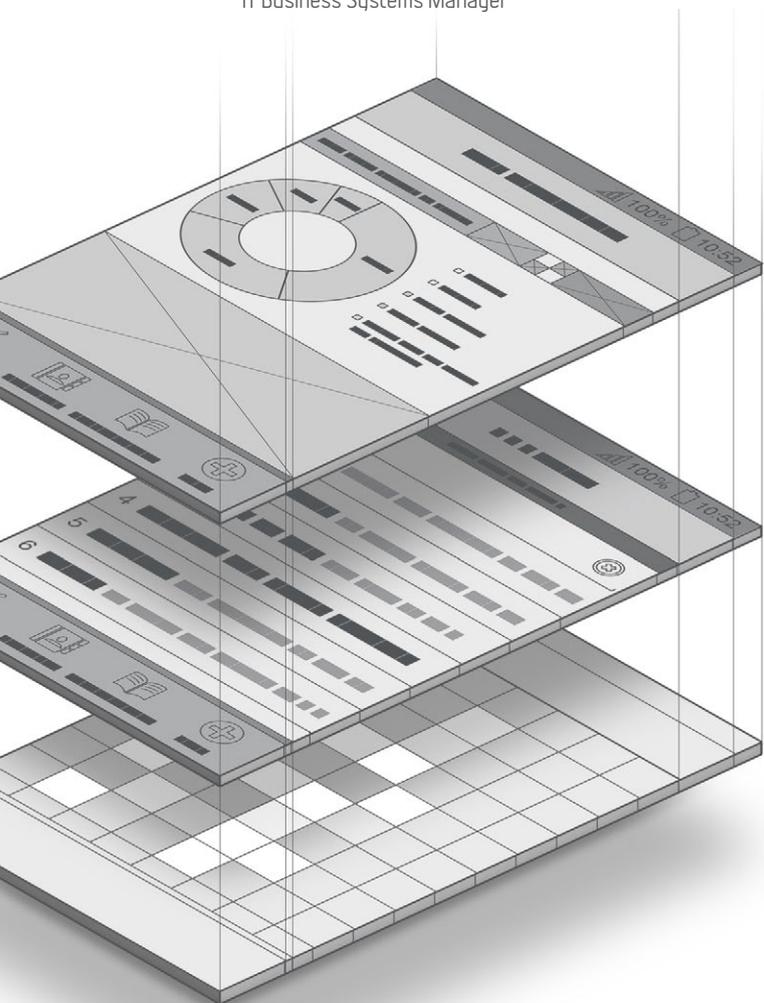
Steamship saw our experience with different technology issues and solutions and decided to ask us to design additional functionality for the applications, once they had been migrated to .NET.

Not only did we help our client with the architecture and design of the new applications, but we also provided ongoing Quality Assurance and testing.

On Quality Assurance, Mike Poole Steamship's IT Business Systems Manager said:

Six years on we remain impressed with the level of QA the company provides.

In the long-run, the applications will be easier to maintain and upgrade, and consequently will last much longer.



The look and feel of the application is more modern and intuitive, therefore users are more satisfied. What's more, the new functionality that the Future Processing team added enables users to automate more tasks and complete critical business processes a lot quicker.

Last but not least, the project was delivered at a considerably lower cost than in-house or on-shore development.

In any large or long-term project a key factor to a successful outcome is communication. We have learned that the approach that works best is meeting the client after each iteration.

However, we felt that we can do more to make our communication as smooth as possible. That's why, we developed our own software – a combination of Instant Messaging and a project management tool – we called it Project Notes. It has allowed the client to make comments directly in the code and ultimately, made projects easier to measure.

Project Notes truly makes a material difference to projects and their outcomes. We now use it within Steamship on all IT projects and it has really improved our capture and measurement.

The solution proved so successful that it was introduced inside Steamship.

MOBILE SOLUTION

In the course of our long-term cooperation, Steamship Mutual have also worked with our mobile department.

We created a bespoke Android application that provides details on law regulations behind the functioning of P&I Clubs. Users are also provided with current profile and financial situation of the club as well as contact details and correspondence for staff.

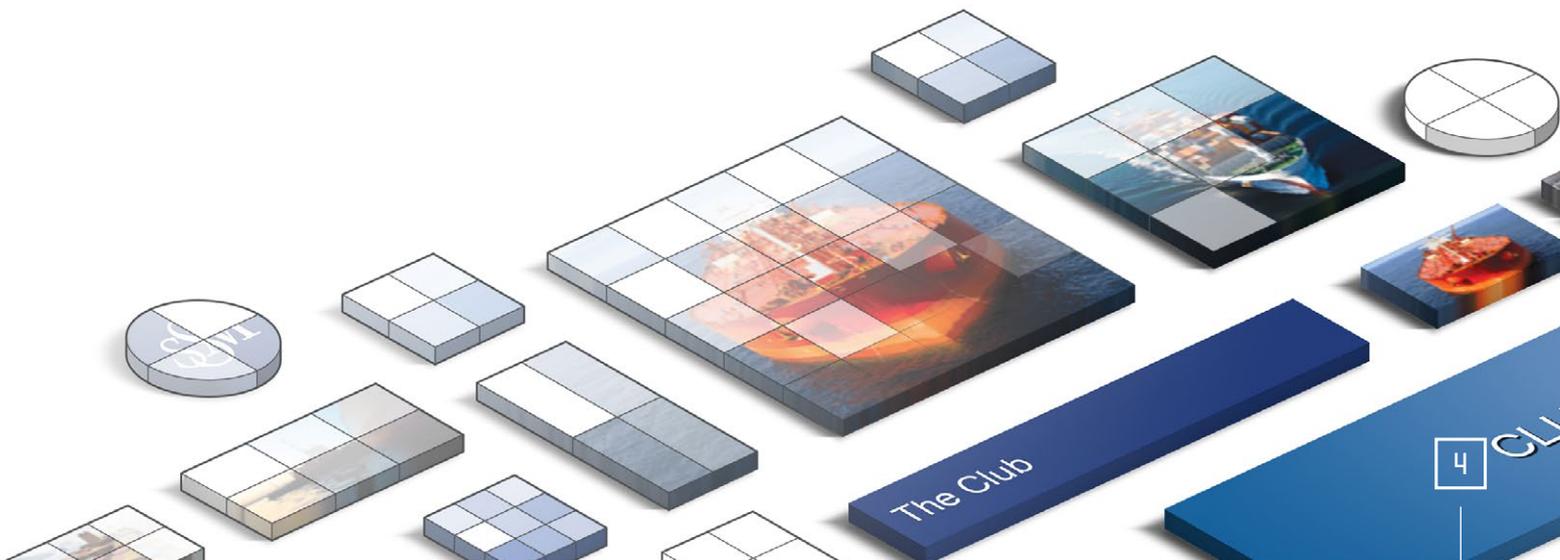
The app, available for most Android and iOS devices, is aimed at ship owners, charterers, brokers, lawyers, surveyors and anyone interested in maritime affairs. It makes Steamships' day-to-day work easier, since all the necessary information is just a click away, instantly available, regardless of location.

Future Processing is also responsible for keeping the application up to date, since law regulations change every six months.

Future Processing have so far helped Steamship Mutual to solve a variety of business problems and, having become a near extension to Steamship's own IT department, we continue supporting them successfully, advising them on introducing new features, updating their software and adjusting it to law changes.

PRIMARY TECHNOLOGIES USED:

- NET
- Oracle
- C#
- Java
- iOS
- Android
- SharePoint
- DevExpress (UI controls)
- WinForms
- Microsoft Communication Foundation



THE RESULT

Future Processing are proud to have eliminated Steamship's risk of not being able to maintain their core systems and ensured the continuity of their business during migration.

While it was a very technically complex project, not only did Future Processing manage to successfully migrate all data, resulting in easy to maintain and upgrade .NET applications, but we also delivered a well-documented, high-quality and user-friendly software.

The new .NET applications created by Future Processing, along with supporting documentation, gave Steamship Mutual a chance for further development of their business.

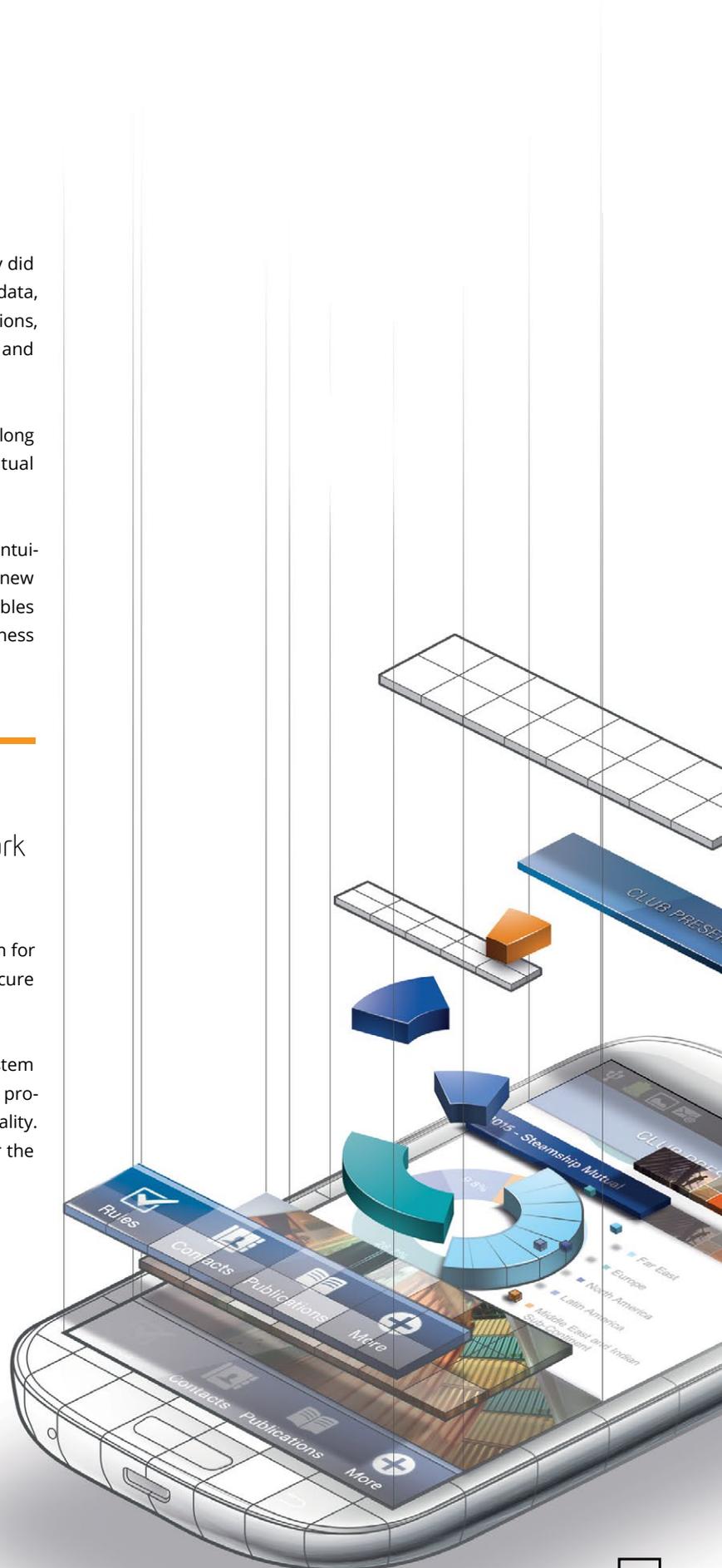
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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Steamship is planning to continue to work with Future Processing in other areas.

We are working on a SharePoint-based Extranet solution for brokers and individual clients, enabling them to have secure access to information.

Steamship is satisfied with the first version of the system and is planning to implement the second phase of the project, expanding the current solution with a new functionality. Flexible architecture we based the system on allows for the platform to be easily upgraded with new modules.



STEAMSHIP MUTUAL ABOUT US



MIKE POOLE

IT Business Systems Manager,
Steamship Mutual

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE FUTURE PROCESSING?

— When we originally chose Future Processing, one of the things we were looking for was a company that we thought could be a long-term IT partner for us. That strategy has certainly paid off as we have been able to work with Future Processing time and time again, on a range of projects from application development, to QA, mobile application development and even IT consultancy.

Consequently, we have worked with a range of different employees with different skill-sets, but every time we have been delighted with the outcome of the individual projects.

WHAT DISTINGUISHED US AGAINST THE COMPETITION?

— I have worked with several supplier partners. There are a few things that make Future Processing really stand out from the crowd.

One is the factors is the company's culture. Team members are very open and honest. You will find out up front if there is a problem and they are not shy of telling you if they think there is a better way of doing something. Equally, if you don't agree with them, they willingly do it your way. Future Processing is one of the most straight-forward un-political companies I have worked with, with easy access to the CEO, yet a truly un-hierarchical structure and a very strong team spirit. The company has managed to retain its personal feel as it has grown.

Skill-levels also vary a lot within most IT companies. However, with Future Processing I can honestly say that everyone I have encountered has an excellent grasp of the technology, can easily get up to speed on a project and delivers quality work with an attention to detail.

We were also very impressed with their approach and adopted some of it for our own in-house projects. Six years on [in 2014] we remain impressed with the level of QA the company provides.

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE COOPERATION WITH FUTURE PROCESSING?

— Working with such a large programme presents many challenges and Future Processing addressed them well by dealing with the applications one at a time and breaking the work down into three week iterations. They were then able to grow and shrink the team from anywhere between 9 and 35 people as required.

While it was a very technically complex project, Future Processing made it pretty painless for us. We had not previously worked with most of the team members before we started this project. However, this was not a problem and the new members of the team picked up the new systems and requirements very easily due mainly to the working practises and culture within Future Processing and also with a collaborative training and handover programme with the Steamship IT staff.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST IN FUTURE PROCESSING?

— Future Processing has experience of lots of different clients with different technology issues and solutions, so it is very helpful for us to tap into their expertise and get ideas that we sometimes hadn't even thought of. As well as helping with the architecting and design of the new applications, they have also given us advice on other projects.

They have great processes and solid infrastructure – much better than you would expect from a company of its size. For example, it has a dedicated project management office which has oversight of all projects and provides ongoing advice and checks. It has also developed its own, very rigorous QA process which I believe many customers, including ourselves, have adopted – partly or in full – for their own in-house projects.

Future Processing employees really are keen and passionate about what they do. They undergo a pretty rigorous hiring procedure and are all really proud of their technical skills. They want things to work.

HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS GROWN THANKS TO COOPERATION WITH FUTURE PROCESSING?

- Future Processing has delivered well-documented, high-quality, user-friendly software that has little technical debt and will be easy to maintain and add further functionality to. The new .NET applications created by Future Processing, along with the supporting documentation, will, in the long-run, be easier to maintain and upgrade and consequently will last the company much longer.

The users like the new applications and are happy with the new user interface and the enhancements which were implemented alongside the migrated systems and that is a key success criterion for us. The look and feel of the applications is more modern and intuitive. What's more, the new functionality that the Future Processing

team added enables users to automate more tasks and complete critical business processes a lot more quickly.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF OUR COOPERATION?

- We have been working with Future Processing for six years, continuously. In the interests of best practice we have reviewed all our partners during that time, Future Processing included, but they have always come through as the best choice for us.

Future Processing has such a large pool of highly-skilled and hard-working IT staff that whatever challenge we have thrown at them so far, they have completed successfully and with great attention to detail. We enjoy working with them and I expect we will continue to do so for a long time.

WHY POLAND?

- We didn't start out deciding to look for a Polish company or even to offshore – geography was not the main driver for us. We wanted to work with a company that demonstrated a passion for quality software, that had excellent skills at its disposal, was cost effective and that had a culture and way of communicating that fitted our organisation. However, when we started looking at companies we felt that considering the impact of time differences, cultural affinities and costs, those in nearshore locations offered the best match for us.



CAN WE HELP YOU SOLVE YOUR BUSINESS PROBLEM? CONTACT US TO FIND OUT.



CONTACT US:

 **Future Processing**

Future Processing
ul. Bojkowska 37A
44-100 Gliwice
POLAND

+48 32 461 23 00

sales@future-processing.com
www.future-processing.com