



Dexter + Chaney

Building construction industry software on solid foundations

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Brad Mathews
VP, Sales & Marketing
Dexter + Chaney Inc

Dexter + Chaney Inc (DCI) are the developers of Spectrum Construction Software, the construction industry application voted number one* by industry insiders. In addition to being the industry's preferred application, Spectrum is unique in that the core business logic has barely changed in 20 years. While competitors had to write afresh every time there was a change in operating system, Spectrum® users enjoyed two decades of ever-growing functionality based on PROIV's platform and database independence.

A smart choice for a late entrant

In technological terms, a five-year head start ought to confer a huge competitive advantage. But the established players in the US market for construction-industry management software did not expect to be competing against PROIV.

In 1983, the newest entrant in that market, Dexter + Chaney Inc (DCI), made a smart move: it chose to build its Spectrum construction management and accounting software in PROIV, the rapid application development tool. According to DCI President, John Chaney, it was "one of the best decisions" they ever made.

More than two decades later, DCI has a turnover of \$13.5m, employs 75 staff, and serves 1,000 construction industry customers throughout the US. DCI customers range in size from smaller builders to companies such as Garney Construction and Adolfson & Peterson that feature near the top of the ENR (Engineering News-Record) size rankings. In 2004 the construction industry voted Spectrum its number one* management application.

Platform independence comes straight out of the box

John's Co-Founder, Mark Dexter, explains that PROIV gives Spectrum the platform- and database-independence that its competitors lack.

He says: "Our customers enjoy long-term stability. Spectrum has supported them through all their server upgrades, their changing choices of database, and all of the platform developments that have occurred over the past 20 years. At no point during that period of technological upheaval did we have to rewrite the basic logic or code of Spectrum. PROIV took everything in its stride."

Life isn't quite so easy for DCI's competitors. They have to go back to basics each time there's a shift in technology.



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Co-founder
Dexter + Chaney Inc

"Our competitors take a couple of years out to rewrite their applications for each new environment," says Mark, "whereas we've been able to devote development resources whole-heartedly towards the broadening of functionality. PROIV's platform-independence gives us the freedom to work on customers' business issues without the distractions of changing technology."

He adds: "I know of one competitor that right now is having to recode for thin client. But not us, we're eight years ahead. With PROIV, it was straight out of the box – and that was way back in 1997."

Customers share the savings

Brad Mathews, DCI's Vice President, Sales and Marketing, believes that PROIV's other big benefit is speed of application build.

"We tend to release a major upgrade once every eighteen months," he says, "yet customers never have to pay. Each new release comes free as part of the annual maintenance contract. The economics are simple: PROIV gives us faster delivery from a smaller investment – savings that we can pass straight on to the customer."

He too likes to recall the ways that Spectrum caught its competitors out: "This is a great example of PROIV at work," he says. "We were the first in the industry to offer document imaging. We introduced it six years ago, yet our competitors are only now managing to bring it in."

Service like this inspires loyalty. So when the US Construction Financial Management Association polled the industry for its 2004 Technology Survey, Spectrum was ranked overall number one* out of 54 construction software packages.

And much more to come

There's no let up in the pace of development of Spectrum. If things look exciting in the short term, they're wide open in the long term.

"With PROIV, we can develop in so many ways," explains Brad. "We'll have a Linux version out towards the end of the year – none of our competitors support more than one platform – and we're looking forward to exploiting the web services in the forthcoming PROIV Version 6."

He adds: "Of course it helps that we have such a close working relationship with NorthgateArinso. They're a fine organisation and we appreciate the partnership we share with them."

* Statistics excerpted from CFMA's 2004 Information Technology Survey for the Construction Industry, fifth edition, with the permission of the Construction Financial Management Association, Princeton NJ, 609-452-8000. CFMA neither evaluated nor ranked software in terms of performance. The survey should not be construed as the advice or opinion of CFMA.

links: www.dexterchaney.com