



## MarineCFO Creates a Shipshape Solution for the Maritime Transport Industry

*Built on the Microsoft platform, MarineCFO's integrated applications help marine transportation companies of all sizes to more effectively handle compliance, financial management and operational requirements by delivering accurate, relevant information in real time.*

Some essential tools of maritime transportation have remained unchanged for thousands of years. But today, the industry's technology and business requirements go far beyond needing a reliable compass and expert seamanship skills. Marine transportation companies must optimize every aspect of their operations to ensure a return on the millions of dollars invested in vessels, shore-side facilities and manpower. Regulatory mandates such as the Homeland Security Act, alcohol and drug testing requirements, and safety regulations require them to continually track and report compliance. And a shortage of skilled labor, sharply rising insurance premiums and increased litigation require maritime operators to keep an even closer eye on costs and revenues.

*“Microsoft’s technology is very reliable and performs extremely well. Even with a small team of product developers, we can create really remarkable solutions.”*

—Dean Shoultz, CEO, Advanced Software

Until recently, the industry has lacked automated tools to meet these increasingly complex challenges. Small and mid-sized marine transportation operators in particular have struggled to make business decisions without real-time, accurate data about vessel locations, crew statistics, incurred expenses and other critical details. Working with disconnected, manually intensive software systems can lead to delays in relaying the latest compliance information to customers as well as to authorities. These same IT limitations also frequently interfere with timely revenue and expense tracking.

MarineCFO Inc., a subsidiary of Louisiana-based Advanced Software, offers a comprehensive suite of software and services uniquely tailored to the needs of regional as well as global marine transportation companies that provide inland and offshore transportation services. The company’s MarineCFO software helps consolidate and integrate multiple business processes—from traffic, maintenance and cargo optimization to hazardous-materials tracking, communications and geographical positioning—to create what Advanced Software CEO Dean Shoultz calls “a true boat-to-balance-sheet solution.”

Customers have three options for deploying and accessing MarineCFO software: in-house on their

own IT infrastructure, via the Internet in a hosted environment on servers managed by MarineCFO, or through a Web application created using Microsoft’s ASP.NET 2.0 architecture. The Web-based models are especially attractive to companies that want to avoid the burden of maintaining an extensive IT infrastructure and applications in-house. This approach also lets users access MarineCFO whether they are on shore, in transit or aboard a vessel. Some companies opt for both an in-house deployment of the traditional MarineCFO software—which offers some richer features and includes a complete accounting system—and Web access for their remote employees.

“Maritime transport operators can rely on MarineCFO to provide a clear view of day-to-day operations and transactions so that they can structure each business project to achieve the highest possible cost efficiency and productivity,” says Shoultz. “MarineCFO enables customers to access and analyze information quickly and with a degree of flexibility that was never available before.”

### **MarineCFO Improves Fleet Responsiveness and Compliance**

The automation and online accessibility of MarineCFO have yielded tremendous benefits for Otto Candies L.L.C., a Louisiana-based marine transportation company that operates more than 100 tugboats, barges and supply vessels. Founded in 1942, it is among the oldest and most trusted offshore transportation providers in the region.

With its previous business management applications, Otto Candies could not integrate in-transit vessel tracking and project management updates

with the company's accounting system and other shore-side business processes. "Meeting customer requests for updates on the status of their jobs, vessel arrival times and other important information in a timely manner had become a real challenge," says PB Candies, director of operations for Otto Candies. "Also, we simply could not access information about project and vessel profitability in an efficient and cost-effective way."

MarineCFO software provides automated, nearly real-time responses to customer inquiries that previously required multiple phone calls and manual retrieval of records. Users have immediate access to the latest information on vessel position, crew statistics and project status. With the ability to compile and analyze profitability reports for each vessel and project online, company managers can also create more accurate budgets and plans.

Since implementing MarineCFO, Otto Candies has reduced its project-to-invoice processing time from one week to just two hours and is responding to customer inquiries 250 percent faster than before. The software also automatically generates crew-licensing renewals and random drug-testing selections, which helps Otto Candies meet compliance requirements more cost effectively.

"We're able to stay ahead of the rapid changes in this industry and make more intelligent business decisions that produce a faster return on our investments using this software," says Candies. "MarineCFO's specialized tools combined with the familiar Microsoft® Office environment have been easy for our employees to learn and very affordable for us to maintain."

## A Development Framework for Creating Powerful Applications

MarineCFO is built on Advanced Software's UA Financial Management and Business Framework, a software development environment that allows for quick creation of mature, mission-critical business applications for virtually any industry or customer need.

The UA Framework uses easy-to-understand wizards that guide users through the creation of virtually any kind of data-driven business application, without the need for deep understanding of the underlying technology or programming languages. These applications can range from entirely new, freestanding solutions to extensions of existing applications. The only requirement is a sound understanding of the business rules that need to be reflected in the software.

Experienced programmers can use the UA Framework to create more powerful applications in less time, include higher-level process improvements more easily, and seamlessly integrate their applications with other systems. Freed from tedious and error-prone coding tasks, developers can focus more time and attention on building powerful and feature-rich applications. "As we continue adapting and expanding the UA Framework to serve other vertical industries, we know we can count on the scalability of Microsoft's platform to support us as our business grows," says Shoultz. "Plus, Microsoft provides tremendous marketing support to help us seize those opportunities."

## Microsoft Technologies Support Performance, Reliability and Ease of Use

MarineCFO software and services incorporate a variety of Microsoft technologies to deliver a user experience that saves customers time and money.

As the back-end database engine for MarineCFO, Microsoft SQL Server™ 2005 provides data replication capabilities that allow users on a boat or at some other remote location to work in the system while offline and synchronize their entries with the main corporate database later. The front-end user interface of MarineCFO is written in Microsoft Office Access™ 2007 and offers built-in integration with the full array of Office productivity applications, providing a familiar and versatile user experience. For example, MarineCFO extensively employs Microsoft Office Excel® pivot tables and pivot graphs for data analysis. The software also allows users to customize their own document templates using Microsoft InfoPath®.

Companies that choose to have MarineCFO hosted remotely as a Web application receive nearly all of this rich functionality through the ASP.NET 2.0 interface, which dynamically adjusts to each user's specific role and needs. An accountant and a boat captain, for instance, would see different screen views and be presented with different sets of tools in MarineCFO based on their user profiles—yet still be working in the same core software system. Business logic stored in SQL Server 2005 supplies the parameters and rules that tell the ASP.NET application which information to present to which viewer.

"The profiles and roles architecture in ASP.NET

helps us address different sets of customer needs without requiring a lot of proprietary or custom coding," says Shoultz. "Each user sees a set of Web parts that are more or less complex according to the person's role." In addition, new encryption and compression logarithms in ASP.NET 2.0 support more secure and economical transmission of data from boats or other locations to the customer's MarineCFO back-end servers.

Microsoft's Virtual Earth™ platform—a core set of tools that combines maps and directions, immersive satellite imagery and local search functionality—can also be embedded in MarineCFO to help users track fleet positions, plot routes or even provide 3-D visualizations of shipping environments.

Shoultz cites many advantages to building MarineCFO products on a Microsoft foundation. "Microsoft's technology is very reliable and performs extremely well. Even with a small team of product developers, we can create really remarkable solutions," he says. "Web-based application development tools like Microsoft Visual Studio® .NET are simple and inexpensive to use, yet every bit as powerful as those of competing platforms."

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