

Shaklee Revitalizes Web Infrastructure and Applications with Zend PHP



Customer: Shaklee Corporation

Geography: Worldwide operations in the U.S., Mexico, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan and China.

Business: Providing premium quality natural nutrition and personal care products, and environmentally friendly home care products.

Challenge: Shaklee's largely Java-based development environment lacked the flexibility, scalability and cost-efficiency required to sustain profitable business growth in rapidly changing global markets. The IT department sought an open-source technology platform robust enough to support its developer community and thousands of distributor web stores it manages across multiple languages and geographies. To be successful, the company's ecommerce systems also needed to stand up to heavy online traffic during mass market promotions and media exposure. At the same time, IT faced tough goals to reduce development costs and accelerate time-to-market with ongoing enhancements to its ecommerce systems.

Solution: Shaklee adopted PHP for all of its web assets, choosing Zend Framework and Zend Studio for its development environment, and Zend Server for its enterprise production environment. The IT department migrated the Shaklee.com corporate website, the Shaklee.net member portal and distributor's web stores to PHP and turned off their legacy Java application servers.

Benefit: Today, Shaklee operates more than a dozen servers using the Zend Server web application server, supporting over 20,000 web stores and 1.2 million distributors across six languages and seven countries worldwide. With help from PHP and Zend, the company built and tested its streamlined ecommerce system in less than 30 days, and realized a significant return on investment in less than a year. Shaklee has gained a more flexible web development platform with lower administrative and support costs. The new server infrastructure can now handle significantly more concurrent users on a single Web server, and job queue capabilities have made it easier to manage and maintain batch jobs in a more automated way. With Zend, the IT group has achieved a two-fold improvement in time-to-market for Web application updates, delivering a consistently higher level of service to its business partners.

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Ken Harris, CIO
Shaklee Corp.

Shaklee Innovation Heritage

For more than half a century, Shaklee has been a leader in developing products for healthier people and a healthier planet. Growing awareness of environmental issues and the need for sustainability have spurred demand for Shaklee products. From its founding, the company leapfrogged traditional retail channels in favor of a community-driven business model that has since transformed thousands of people into entrepreneurial business owners. This business model is widely hailed as the best approach to selling consumer goods in today's Web 2.0 world. With globalization, tough economic times and increasing competition, Shaklee has entered a new period of innovation, this time leveraging open source technology to build sustainable business growth.

When Ken Harris joined Shaklee as its new CIO, he had the keen perspective and experience gained as CIO of Fortune 100 companies including Nike, Gap, and PepsiCo. "Shaklee products have great desirability and relevance in today's market, but the brand identity had not kept pace with the company's business evolution. The corporate website was generally used as a passive

advertising vehicle and it lacked the ecommerce muscle we needed to support business growth. The site was unnecessarily complex, it didn't scale well, and as a Java-based technology platform it was going to be difficult and costly to modernize," said Harris.

Shaklee CTO Chris Jones approached Harris and suggested they move away from Java, adopt PHP across the board, and go with Zend. "We knew we had to increase the scalability of our platform, and we had about 20 business days to retool our platform to handle the increased load that an upcoming broadcast media opportunity would bring. Zend provided a fully-supported open-source PHP development framework, a broad-based developer community, and far better tools for productivity, scalability and performance than what we had with Java or simple open-source PHP."

PHP and Zend: A Recipe for Performance and Productivity

"We migrated virtually everything from Java to PHP," said Jones. "Zend Server's Java bridge technology and cluster management was essential to our success. The entire process took less than two months, which was no small feat, and very fortunate, because Shaklee was about to guest-star on one of daytime TV's most popular talk shows. With an estimated 20 million viewers, the show had the potential to generate traffic volumes about 80 times our normal load, which could have taken us down if we hadn't been prepared." The show aired three times throughout the year with nine re-broadcasts, and Shaklee managed the resulting spikes in online shopping and order-taking with complete success.

"Our web development is more closely aligned with our business model now that we've moved to PHP and Zend Framework," said Jones. Previously, the IT department had to build a base corporate site, cloning it, making repeated enhancements to the clone and each time merging the changes back to the base site. It was a slow, painful and error-prone process. Now, they use PHP and Smarty, and their own environment built on Zend Framework and best practices, to integrate the entire process.

With PHP and Smarty templates, Jones' team finds it easier to train people, design and extend features, and maintain Web assets on a global scale. They can respond rapidly to major market trends on a local level by creating Web store templates around relevant themes or audiences,

for example: 'Rx for a Healthier Life', 'Young Mothers' or 'Get Clean' for eco-friendly products. Templates are then localized in Spanish, Japanese, Chinese and other languages.

"We're far more productive now that we are free of the static nature of our previous Java system," said Jones. "Using Zend Studio IDE ensured a fast ramp up for our developers, who became proficient within a month of introduction to the tool. This meant an across-the-board benefit for my developers and helped us transition smoothly from Java to PHP, since Zend Studio is based on the Eclipse platform."

"Zend Server has provided us with several important advantages. Zend Server's Code Tracing capabilities reduced our debugging and troubleshooting timeline by as much as 50 percent. We use it constantly, and it helps us identify root cause issues proactively before they have impact on our users. Caching and acceleration allow us to optimize performance even as we scale up applications, and Zend Server's Job Queue provides enterprise-level management of job processing and maintenance so we can improve resource utilization and application availability."

"There's no need to constantly track down, test and load PHP security updates and hot fixes across all our servers. Zend has automated all this in Zend Server; we just apply their tested, stable Web application server and we're in business."

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**Chris Jones, CTO
Shaklee Corp.**

A Healthy Future Online

"Using PHP and Zend really keeps us innovating," said Jones. "We're now creating a dedicated website for our more than 1.2 million distributors. The site contains widgets and APIs to help them run their businesses professionally and productively. Virtually no one else in our market, or possibly the entire retail industry (with the exception of eBay as a special case), has ever

done this. We have a lot of data, shopping cart knowledge, and other Web assets that our distributor online community can leverage to build their own businesses better and more efficiently than ever, and Zend plays a key role in our ability to deliver effectively on the Web."

"In the coming year, we will be leveraging our Zend platform as we implement social media technologies. With PHP and Zend, Shaklee enjoys a flexible Web development and production environment and access to a thriving PHP community. With ready access to the latest Web APIs, libraries and training to support our endeavor, we'll remain agile in development so we can be not only best but first-in-market with new offerings for our loyal customers."

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The PHP Company

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