

ASI is pleased to announce that Microsoft has written a case study for the Merlin® web-based product configurator developed for Mold-Masters, a leading manufacturer of advanced hot runner systems for the plastics injection molding industry.

ASI and its professional services division, Mavpro, provided expert design and development services to customize ASI's product configuration components to satisfy Mold-Masters' unique business requirements.

Mold-Masters Case Study

ASI/Mavpro, a Toronto-based systems consultant and custom software developer, has gained a solid reputation by helping customers integrate large-scale database applications, transaction processing and Internet technologies into their business operations.

As a Microsoft Certified Partner, ASI/Mavpro is certified in, and provides development services for, Microsoft SQL Server, Access, Visual Basic, and Visual C++ applications, as well as Internet/intranet, e-commerce, and wireless technologies.

ASI/Mavpro is committed to its customers, as evidenced by its long-standing relationship with Mold-Masters Ltd., a world leader in hot runner technology for the global plastics industry. Thanks to ASI/Mavpro's ingenuity, Mold-Masters has built a sophisticated Microsoft-based knowledge management solution enabling customers to completely configure, price, and build a hot runner system in real time over the Internet. The solution, available at www.e-hotrunners.com, is the first of its kind in the world.

Hot runners are used worldwide in the injection molding of high-quality thermoplastic components for the automotive, medical, electronics, packaging and consumer products industries. A hot runner system maintains the temperature and flow properties of plastic within a mold base assembly to make a consistent and accurate mold.

"Most Internet sites could be considered data stores - people can retrieve data from the Web site but they don't have a truly interactive platform to connect to the company's business system," says Larry McLennan, vice-president of consulting services at Toronto-based ASI/Mavpro. "Because e-hotrunners.com is seamlessly integrated with Mold-Masters' business and engineering systems, customers without an engineering background can configure a hot runner system, place an order and track the production cycle in a secure and timely manner."

ASI/Mavpro's affiliation with Mold-Masters dates back to 1997 with the development of Mold-Masters' first CD-ROM product catalogue. Soon after, ASI/Mavpro led the creation of the Mold-Masters Merlin™ Online Design Wizard. When Mold-Masters decided to evolve Merlin into an interactive, computer-aided design-based e-commerce initiative closely tied to the company's business and engineering systems, ASI/Mavpro's expertise was called upon once again.

It took just four months from concept to go-live to launch the powerful and flexible e-commerce solution. E-hotrunners.com is built on the Microsoft BackOffice suite of server applications, including Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 Server, Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 clustered for high availability, Microsoft Site Server 3.0 Commerce Edition, and Microsoft Transaction Server 4.0. Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS) delivers active server pages and static content.

E-hotrunners.com is built around COM and DCOM technology, enabling Mold-Masters to conduct rapid development of components and business logic through a set of Microsoft development tools. The entire platform links to Mold-Masters' SAP and CAD systems running on Windows NT.

Because the solution is fully scalable, Mold-Masters will be able to increase system capability and capacity easily as business grows. This is a great advantage since Mold-Masters foresees more than 25 per cent of its customers to correspond with the company over the Internet by June 2001.

"ASI/Mavpro acted as our extended workbench and remote office during the entire project," says Jonathon Fischer, president of Mold-Masters Ltd. "They realized our vision by taking the time to completely understand our products and our business functions and then configuring a unique solution with superior functionality. With ASI/Mavpro's expertise and Microsoft's robust and flexible technology, building a hot runner system has never been easier."

About ASI

Actco Systems (ASI) is a full-service software company founded in 1991 to bring fleet maintenance and parts management solutions to the transportation industry. ASI is a member of the Actco Group, a diversified organization with hundreds of

employees and an asset base of several hundred million dollars, including operating companies in automobile and truck sales and service, vehicle leasing, software, and real estate development.

ASI is sharply focused on the development and implementation of software products covering the entire vehicle Product Life Cycle. With our extensive knowledge of the transportation industry, ASI is well positioned and uniquely qualified to design and implement product-based solutions that address our customers' business issues in the areas of Product Configuration, Product Acquisition, Product Maintenance, Parts Acquisition, and Product Remarketing.

Today, ASI products are installed at more than 700 locations supporting the work of 5,000+ end users. With numerous success stories, we have established ourselves as leaders in the transportation industry and the first choice for customers requiring software products and support proven to work in the real world.