

CHASE IV – From Standalone to Java Enterprise Edition



Established in 1984 as an offshoot of the Aston University Health and Safety Department, HASTAM is an independent company employing a multi-disciplinary team of health, safety and environmental specialists. HASTAM has been assisting clients to successfully manage safety issues for over twenty-five years. In addition to their training and consultancy services, HASTAM produces a number of off-the-shelf products designed to simplify health, safety and environmental management, including the widely used CHASE audit and evaluation system, which has been in use since 1988. HASTAM's CHASE software is the flexible solution for managing: audits, inspections, compliance assessments, testing of individual competence, completing employee perception surveys and tracking improvement actions.

The Challenge:

Chase had become a legacy system with huge overheads to maintain and support the application and customer base. The application did not support multi-user access and the loyal customers were running multiple installations to support their users.

The CHASE software was originally developed in 1988 as an MS-DOS application using the existing CHASE I and CHASE II audit manuals developed by HASTAM from 1984-1986. These were simple checklists with Yes/No/Not-Applicable answers and a simple scoring system. This application was immediately successful and there was considerable development of the program by HASTAM's development team from 1989 to around 1994. In 1996 a Windows version was released and this still forms the core of the current application.

However, this platform was rapidly reaching the end of its service life as it uses early 32 bit Windows technology for the backend (DAO/Jet) database and MFC 8 for the application and user interfaces. CHASE III was a desktop based application and each user had to run a complete installation setup at their machine prior to usage. Also the data processed from multiple users was updated by using file import/export management activities.

Chase has a strong following and brand loyalty with house hold names such as Cadburys (now owned by Kraft), Dairy Crest, British Waterways, Scottish Water, various local authorities and universities to name a few. Due to the platform limitations, the loyal customer base has devised workarounds and stretched methods of working with the standalone application. For example, Cadburys runs approximately 30 standalone Chase servers to support their geographically dispersed offices and production facilities in UK.

“Tabaq achieves high standards in development and quality assurance. With every build delivered in time, we have achieved over 70% cost saving by outsourcing the development to Tabaq.”

*David Hewitt,
IT Director at Hastam.*

Maintaining these systems, applying updates and patches and giving access to more users is a big challenge for the Cadbury's IT team. British Waterways has been using Chase for the almost 15 years to conduct health and safety audits. However, they cannot extend the usage to their field workers carrying Samsung Q1 GPS enabled smart devices because of technology limitations. Other Chase users faced similar challenges.

The Solution:

Chase customers needed a typical client server web based application that could provide multi-user and multi-browser capability to its users with more attractive application and user interfaces. CHASE users needed a system where they could process their data without the worries of file import/export management activities by having a centralized database.

The idea of CHASE IV was forged when Tabaq software proposed to re-engineer the old application into an enterprise application built on JEE technologies. After eight months of development, the core functionality of CHASE IV has been successfully delivered to Hastam. CHASE IV uses state of the art open source technologies such as JSF, EJBs, JPA, AJAX and XML with MySQL as backend database. The core functionality, workflow and layout of the application remains the same. However, the JEE technologies make the application a truly modern web based scalable application.

The Result:

With CHASE IV, Hastam can offer an audit application extremely capable to meet the modern world challenges by providing interactive Ajax based user interfaces, classical client server architecture and latest open source technologies implementation. CHASE has become a multiuser, multi browser web based application with centralised database from single user desktop application.

Plans are currently in place to rollout CHASE IV to a few selected clients such as Cadburys, British Waterways and Fife City Council. This will follow with rollout plans for the remaining customer base.

Tabaq Software will provide continued support to Hastam and its customer base with further development projects including data migration utility, CHASE mobile application, jComply Chase integration and other bespoke enhancements.

About Tabaq Software:

Tabaq Software is a software development company with a goal to provide bespoke IT solutions to companies to help them implement better, more efficient and cost effective business solutions.

With a highly technical and business-aware team, Tabaq Software focuses on adding commercial value through providing bespoke software development services to clients whose needs are not fulfilled by off the shelf software. Tabaq Software offers its customers a range of bespoke services including application development, application re-engineering, application Integration, mobile application development, web application development including Web 2.0 and CMS development. Support and maintenance services for live sites and projects are also offered by Tabaq Software.

Tabaq Software has designed and developed a unique support network for the convenience and satisfaction of Tabaq's clients and partners. This portal provides an instant, secure and trouble free platform to file issues as well as access technical documentation and knowledge base.

jComply is Tabaq Software's flagship product. jComply is a complete policies and procedures management system which is currently being used in financial, healthcare, public, pharmaceutical and other sectors. jComply is available as a standard license or as software as a service. Add-on modules include risk assessment, accident and incident management, audit and jComply mobile.

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