



SPECTRUM WEB PRODUCTS CASE STUDY - FREEBEN

FreeBen is a software application for Financial Advisers distributed via a secure website (www.freeben.co.uk). It is part of the product portfolio of Harwil Associates, the parent company for Spectrum Web Products. FreeBen went into initial development in May 2008 and was launched in December of that year. Since then it has been steadily developed, to the point where it is now firmly established within the Financial Services industry.

FreeBen is an excellent example of how a high-quality, robust solution can be delivered using a combination of standard, low-cost products.

There are four key elements to FreeBen:

1) The FreeBen application.

This was designed using Microsoft Access 2007, and is distributed as an Access Runtime database. Access Runtime is a free application provided by Microsoft, so users are not obliged to buy application software to make FreeBen work. Using FreeBen, Financial Advisors complete a questionnaire on behalf of their client, and then produce a report into the client's entitlement to particular State Benefits. This is usually an extremely complex and time-consuming exercise, but through careful design of FreeBen we have enabled Advisers to do this quickly and accurately. This is in fact a good example of the versatility of Microsoft Access—it can be used for many applications, not merely data storage and retrieval. We have also built in security to guard against unlicensed use of the software.

2) The FreeBen website.

Written using ASP, this website is both the marketing site for FreeBen and the means of distribution of the software. Advisors register via the website, and once the application is validated they are issued with login credentials, so they can download and install FreeBen. Upgrades to FreeBen are available in the secure area of the website, so users have easy access to the latest version.

3) The FreeBen website Content Management System (CMS).

This is a simple CMS which enables efficient administration of online access to the secure area of the FreeBen website, and remote management of FreeBen licenses. It is based on a small number of simple SQL Database tables.

4) The FreeBen Administration Database.

Designed in-house this is an Access 2007 database that contains all the client information required to manage the FreeBen user base. It manages the workflow relating to user subscriptions, and also connects with the online SQL database tables to automate the registration process.

So, FreeBen uses a combination of websites, databases and CMS to support all the business requirements of providing a product to a large online user base. The experience we have gained in developing FreeBen leaves us well placed to support similar projects. Through Spectrum Web Products we can offer everything from standard websites to online databases, from Content Management Systems to business databases - and even bespoke software development using the wider capabilities of Microsoft Access.

We are not simply a technology house - through FreeBen we are ourselves managing a web-based business. The experience this gives us means that we approach projects from a business perspective, and we provide solutions that first and foremost meet the underlying business requirement.

For a free, no obligation consultation contact spectrum web products on 01283 790909 or
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