

AZROC Integrates COBOL Application with ColdFusion, WebLogic

"To rewrite in Java just didn't make sense to us. It was much easier, faster, and more efficient to convert to ACUCOBOL-GT. This has been the smoothest conversion I've ever experienced. Everything just fell into place."

—Jerry Guhr, Web Application Developer, Arizona Registrar of Contractors

Fast Facts:

- Government agency
- Tracks 50,000 contractor licenses
- Headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona
- Offices throughout the state
- www.azroc.gov

Application:

- Inquiry, licensing renewal and reporting system

Business Needs:

- Platform conversion
- Web access
- Interoperability

New Environment:

Development

- Windows NT Server
- ACUCOBOL-GT® Development System
- AcuBench®
- Macromedia ColdFusion

Deployment

- IBM AIX 5.1
- ACUCOBOL-GT Runtime
- AcuODBC®, AcuODBC Server
- BEA WebLogic
- Macromedia ColdFusion

Previous Environment:

- Honeywell/Bull GCOS 6
- Bull DPX 20 using an HVX emulator
- HVX COBOL

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Business Issue

The Arizona Registrar of Contractors (AZROC) is a regulatory agency for the State of Arizona. To promote quality construction and protect public welfare, the agency tracks licensing status for nearly 50,000 contractors statewide.

AZROC's application performs three primary functions: inquiry, licensing and renewal, and reporting. To give citizens Web access to the registry, the inquiry system has an interface in BEA WebLogic.

Until recently, the application ran on a Bull GCOS 6 system. When Bull announced it would no longer support the platform, AZROC sought an alternative. Bull recommended AZROC rewrite its application in Java and run completely under WebLogic, but AZROC estimated it would take 10 new programmers several years to complete.

AZROC wanted a modern solution that would interoperate with WebLogic, provide flexible ad-hoc reporting, and support graphical development on a Windows PC.

Solution

Jerry Guhr, Web Application Developer for AZROC, was impressed with the "compile once/run anywhere" portability of Acucorp's COBOL Virtual Machine™. He developed a utility to convert 82 HVX COBOL screen programs to ACUCOBOL-GT. Theresa O'Hayre, a development colleague, converted roughly 420 batch programs. The team deployed the application on IBM AIX. To connect the COBOL and WebLogic interface, they used named pipes.

To provide an ad-hoc reporting capability, Jerry developed a program using Macromedia's ColdFusion with a GUI in Flash. To give the program access to COBOL Vision files, AZROC used a combination of EasySoft's ODBC driver and Acucorp's technologies.

Today, both the WebLogic inquiry system and the ColdFusion reporting system have seamless access to Vision data files. AZROC staff can use ODBC applications to query the same data.

Benefits

One of the biggest benefits to AZROC is that its screens appear to the end user exactly as they did before. "Thanks to Theresa's work and Acucorp tools, some users couldn't even tell the difference," Jerry said. In addition, developers are enjoying significant productivity gains. Theresa said, "The old COBOL was cumbersome. I had to use VI and ED to copy and paste code." Now, all development is performed in a graphical environment with AcuBench. Performance has improved, too. According to Jerry, programs that formerly ran in 10 minutes now run in one minute.

Future Plans

AZROC is now developing an online renewal system that uses ColdFusion with an XML-based Web service interface running under IBM WebSphere. It will connect with COBOL via named pipes as before. For this implementation, AZROC will use Acucorp technologies to build the XML and schemas that will communicate with the Web services.