

## HAL, Inc., Delivers with Acucorp Solutions

**Industry:** Software

**Current Environment:** Windows NT / 9x / 2000 and UNIX

**Application:** Supply Chain Management, Supply Chain Execution, Purchase Order Line Item Logistics, Warehousing and Distribution, Cross Dock, Freight Forwarding, and AES software

**Acucorp Solutions:** e-Business, Productivity, Data Access

**Previous COBOL:** ICOBOL



### PARTNERS IN SUCCESS

E. Allen Parkin, President and CEO; Dwight Barnhart, Executive VP; Ron Zimmerman, Software Production Supervisor; and Paul Parkin, VP Customer Service

By Peggy Monahan

**H**AL, Inc., knows how to get things moving. The Houston, Texas, company's MEPAW<sup>®</sup> software provides real-time process control over the shipment of physical goods from source to destination, along with the ability to generate all required documentation. With HAL's software, logistics managers in a variety of industries can direct and track all freight movements from initial packing, through interim transport stops and re-packaging, to arrival at a final destination anywhere in the world. Today, with software solutions from Acucorp, Inc., HAL's customers – including manufacturers, suppliers, transportation providers, warehousing, and construction companies – enjoy instant materials shipment tracking via the Web, as well as access to their preferred databases.

#### First Stop: ACUCOBOL<sup>TM</sup>-GT

HAL's character-based software was originally written in Data General's ICOBOL. After exposure to Acucorp,

Inc., solutions during a small enhancement project, the company decided to migrate its code to ACUCOBOL-GT. According to Paul Parkin, HAL's Vice President of Customer Service, the decision to switch to ACUCOBOL-GT was based primarily on Acucorp's integrated solutions, especially the data access technology that would provide the capability to read from and write to relational databases like Microsoft SQL Server and Oracle and to access indexed data files. With this flexibility, HAL could tailor its software for an individual customer, depending on the particular type of database in use. Accommodating a large number of users was also a plus for the Acucorp solution, and the ability to port ACUCOBOL-GT programs to hundreds of platforms was an especially

attractive feature. Says Parkin, "A big factor for us is the wonderful, redeeming portability quality of ACUCOBOL-GT."

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HAL, Inc.***

The conversion to ACUCOBOL-GT began in the spring of 1996. The project was undertaken primarily by HAL's in-house development staff with assistance from Acucorp technical personnel. The smooth transition spanned 60 days and involved a total of 2200 programs and 760 screens.

But that was only the beginning. Increasing customer demands for worldwide, rapid access to the status of goods in transit led company President Al Parkin to champion the launching of freight tracking software on the World Wide Web. Given that a Web browser of some kind is installed on nearly all of

today's computers, Web enablement is an economical choice. Computers located in a company's headquarters or a regional office can access the same information that a remote user in the field can display on a laptop. The speed with which the information would be available to the user was an important consideration. According to Parkin, "We knew that quick, easy accessibility to data would get us the business."

### **Next Step: The World Wide Web**

Al Parkin turned to Acucorp for a solution to this critical business demand, and Acucorp's family of e-business solutions gave him a wide range of choices. During his assessment, Parkin concluded that the new technology must have minimal impact on customers. A user should be able to launch the software from a browser without having to add any extra components. And the core COBOL application should work seamlessly with the new front end. The solution was formulated with this ease-of-use criterion in mind. It would involve creating an HTML front end for the tracking software's user interface and writing a Common Gateway Interface (CGI) program in COBOL to launch HAL's tracking software in the end user's Web browser.

After the tracking application's HTML front end was created, a CGI script written in ACUCOBOL-GT provided the communication between the Web server and the tracking application written in COBOL. Using

ACUCOBOL-GT for the CGI program meant that HAL's COBOL-experienced development staff did not need to learn a new programming language to accomplish the objective.

With Web-enabled software, users can simply point and click in a Web site to access HAL's software. Enter a login name and password, and the tracker is launched. A user can monitor shipment movements and verify current freight status using various key data, such as project number, purchase order number, or requisition order number. After entering this key data or launching the search engine, users can access a wealth of information, like the description, quantity, and price of an ordered material; the number of the project it belongs to; the item's mode of transport; the promised date of arrival; and the name of the vendor and the vendor's contact person and phone number. Cross-reference links allow users to, for example, jump from tracking by purchase order to tracking by project number. Required documentation can be printed out from the browser.

HAL is delighted with its new Web capabilities. Its investment in COBOL resources is enhanced, and it has taken a major e-business step to satisfy a critical customer demand. The evolution of HAL's product line continues. With ACUCOBOL-GT's graphical user interface (GUI) development tools, the company's next step is to maintain its character-based applications while developing a GUI version for customers who want a modern Windows look and feel. Says Parkin,

"We enjoy the opportunity to have a company like Acucorp in our shop." Look for this story to be continued!

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For more information about Acucorp, Inc., and our products, please visit [www.acucorp.com](http://www.acucorp.com)

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