



**Isle of Man
Government**

Reillys Ellan Vannin



The Isle of Man Government slashes IT costs by £1.5 million with a fast and efficient migration initiative

“We have a far-reaching vision for comprehensive, fully integrated, online government services here on the Isle of Man, and moving to modern, flexible and cost-effective Windows platforms is a key element of our IT strategy. Advanced development tools from Micro Focus enabled us to migrate our critical COBOL applications from the old Unisys mainframe to our strategic platform rapidly and without impacting the quality of our services.”

[Allan Paterson, Director of Information Systems Division, Isle of Man Government]

The Customer

The Isle of Man Government delivers a broad range of online services to business and residents, plus all the enterprise services needed for its own administration, such as payroll, taxation and vehicle registration.

The Challenge

The cost of operating and maintaining its aging Unisys mainframe was becoming increasingly uneconomical for the Isle of Man Government’s Information Systems Division (ISD). Advances in hardware development meant that modern server platforms were much more cost-effective, plus the management overhead associated with maintaining specialist mainframe skills needed was high.

ISD decided that the time was right to move all the mainframe applications, which provided a range of key enterprise services, to a more strategic and cost-effective platform. Costs always have to be kept down, but there were additional challenges for the migration project.

“Five years ago, we instigated an innovative programme called JUPITER (Joined UP IT for the Electronic Resident) with the objective of providing a highly integrated range of IT facilities using shared services and a single platform architecture for maximum efficiency,” explains Chris Davies, Senior Project Manager with ISD. “The target environment for the migrated applications had to conform to the Microsoft-based JUPITER architecture – a very different environment compared to the mainframe.”

Another key constraint was that the user community had to be unaffected by the move, because the cost of retraining the large numbers of staff involved would be substantial. Also, the data entry workload was huge, and it was vital to avoid impacting productivity in this area by changing familiar user interfaces.

Challenge:

The Unisys mainframe that provided key enterprise services to the Isle of Man Government was approaching the end of its useful life. The Information Systems Division faced the challenge of moving large and complex mainframe applications to new, strategic platforms without impacting critical government services.

Solution:

Application Modernization:

- Micro Focus Net Express with .NET
- Micro Focus Server for .NET

Benefits:

- Operating costs cut by removing dependence on expensive mainframe
- Migration of key COBOL applications accelerated
- Risk minimized by avoiding major changes to proven software
- Reduced maintenance costs through the use of powerful development tools

The Solution

The alternative approaches considered ranged from redeveloping the mainframe applications on the Windows platform to moving the existing code unchanged. *"The option of rewriting such large, critical applications was rejected because of the high cost and risk involved,"* comments Chris. *"It was impossible to justify the huge amount of time and money that would be spent just to deliver what we already had in terms of functionality."*

However, moving large quantities of complex software, written for the mainframe environment and using the proprietary DMS database, is challenging. The ability to migrate applications while preserving the business logic and the user interfaces, without incurring excessive development costs, depends on using the right software tools. ISD selected the Net Express COBOL development environment from Micro Focus for the project.

Net Express was able to migrate all the business logic essentially unchanged, the only code amendments being where the new environment implemented the language specification more rigorously in a small number of instances. An additional piece of development work was to move the contents of the DMS databases to Microsoft SQL Server 2005 and create new data access libraries to enable the applications to use the new databases without modification.

The Result

The main aim of the migration project, which was to cut costs, has been achieved, with approximately £1.5 million being saved over a 6 year programme from the removal of mainframe support and licensing costs. Only five developer years of effort were needed to migrate 1.5 million lines of code, resulting in a positive ROI in less than a year. This compares favorably with the estimated five to ten years of effort that would have been needed to rewrite just one mainframe application.

A further benefit arising from the migration process is an improvement in code quality resulting from fixing ambiguities identified by the Micro Focus development tools. *"We now know our software is robust and completely portable,"* reports Chris, *"which means that we will always be able to take advantage of the most cost-effective platforms in the future."*

ISD is no longer dependent on expensive specialist mainframe skills and its development staff can now use the well-established Microsoft Visual Studio interface supported by Net Express for application maintenance.

The Future

The Isle of Man's core enterprise applications are constantly evolving. *"In addition to our ongoing development workload in response to changing government policies and rules, we are always looking to improve the level of integration of our services,"* says Chris. *"The support for Service Oriented Architecture in Micro Focus' development tools offers the potential for extending the ability of our COBOL applications to work with other applications through web services in the future."*

About Micro Focus

Micro Focus provides innovative software that allows companies to dramatically improve the business value of their enterprise applications. Micro Focus Enterprise Application Modernization and Management software enables customers' business applications to respond rapidly to market changes and embrace modern architectures with reduced cost and risk.

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