

BEDFORD SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT LTD: READY FOR THE FUTURE

Visual COBOL: a great alternative to re-write or replace



URL: www.bedford-systems.com
 Industry: Software (ISV)
 Country: Canada

Highlights

- Reduced development costs by 30%
- Adoption of flexible, modern, and industry-standard development environment
- Reuse of existing business logic for more cost-effective application development
- UI modernization through industry standard tools

“Using Visual COBOL, we wanted to modernize and enhance the user interface and, looking forward, we wanted to use the same back-end code to move our applications onto tablet or other mobile platforms.”

Michael Purser,
 President,
 Bedford Systems Management Ltd.

At a glance: Bedford Systems Management Ltd

Modernizing Application Development and User Experience with Visual COBOL.

Solution:

- Visual COBOL for Visual Studio
- COBOL Server

Challenge

Bedford Systems’ Aspire Project suite of products assists clients with task management as well as project-oriented time and expense recording. The suite combines essential accounting features with sophisticated tools for tracking project costs, monitoring project performance and assessing overall profitability. Developed 25 years ago, many of its loyal clients consider it a trusted and proven project management solution.

The software suite was written in COBOL using Micro Focus Net Express® version 5.1. This application also utilized Dialog Systems® for application screen development. Its age posed a challenge for Bedford Systems, as president Michael Purser explains: “The Dialog interface, although a graphical user interface, restricted us to a 32Bit procedural deployment environment. We have some separation between our data layer and our business logic and the user interface, but we were inclined to create a much more nimble and flexible application architecture for the future. We wanted to use Visual COBOL to modernize and enhance the user interface. Looking forward, we aimed to use the same back-end code to move our applications onto tablet or other mobile platforms. All this meant we needed to change the fundamentals of the application infrastructure. We investigated re-write and replace options, both of which were far too costly and would take too long to achieve. As Net Express COBOL users, the natural step for us was to look at Visual COBOL.”

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Embracing Microsoft technologies

Bedford Systems aligns its long-term application roadmap with web technologies, such as ASP.NET, so the integration of Visual COBOL with the Microsoft Visual Studio IDE and the Microsoft .NET framework seemed like a natural fit. The first objective was to move the existing code base with 640 Dialog-based screens and 2,000 programs "as is" directly to Visual COBOL. Purser comments: "The code conversion process was actually very simple and needed little, if any, intervention. Once we set our project parameters we encountered very few errors in the conversion of 2,000 programs."

"Now that code conversion to Visual COBOL has been achieved, the next step is the modernization of our user interface". Bedford Systems wants an uncluttered, efficient and intuitive client interface, minimizing the number of clicks required and improving the overall user experience.

Development efficiency

Michael expects to see greatly improved efficiencies in the development process: "Visual COBOL enables us to set up standards and templates for developers to follow, reducing re-keying and saving us both time and money. This gives us the opportunity to enhance new application functionality as well as create a modern and flexible user interface for our clients."

This new development functionality and capability delivered with Visual COBOL will provide Bedford Systems' clients with a modernized user interface much faster than originally planned. The project time to delivery is expected to increase by 30%. By standardizing development processes, it will be easier to maintain and support its existing application and have the ability to enhance it in the future.

Ready for the future

The opportunity to reduce development costs by 30% and introduce a new-found flexibility in their existing application means Michael is excited about the opportunities which lie ahead: "With our new Visual COBOL environment we can see how easy it will be to move our application onto future platforms such as mobile, which will be a great advantage for our clients. We haven't needed much support from Micro Focus throughout the code conversion phase, but when it was required, the support team really helped us on our way. We will look to Micro Focus to provide future consultation around optimum architecture as we move further in our application modernization journey."

About Micro Focus

Micro Focus, a member of the FTSE 250, provides innovative software that allows companies to dramatically improve the business value of their enterprise applications. Micro Focus Enterprise Application Modernization, Testing 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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