

City of Fort Worth

City of Fort Worth modernizes its application landscape to optimize service delivery while lowering IT costs.

Overview

The City of Fort Worth is the fifth-largest city in the state of Texas, and the 16th-largest in the United States. The administration employs over 6,000 people serving a population of around 750,000 residents, with estimates for this to reach 1.2 million by 2030. The City's IT Solutions department delivers customer-focused, cost-effective IT services.

In addition to the daily ongoing support provided by IT Solutions, the department also manages a significant project program to deliver and develop applications and systems that improve services and productivity.

Challenge

A productive mainframe environment has been in use for over 30 years, but now the City has

embarked on a major project to buy and implement a new distributed ERP system driven by market demand to quickly respond to business change. This will deliver modern HR and financial system functionality and will also enable the City to reduce annual IT costs.

Also running on the mainframe were a number of 'residual' applications, as Mark DeBoer, Senior IT Manager at the City of Fort Worth, explains, "The applications are generally used for looking up historical information concerning areas including City Secretary, equipment services, garbage and the courts. A few are active applications that manage traffic signs and signals, street services and the jury service, which provides jury summons for the City Courts." DeBoer took the decision to move the residual applications and looked around for alternative hosting solutions.

Solution

Initially the City's IT Solutions considered using in-house resources to convert all of the residual applications to Microsoft .NET and SQL Server. After scoping out the requirements, it was felt that the additional workload would put too much pressure on already busy teams, and bringing in a third party consultancy would present additional time and cost issues. "Ideally," according to DeBoer, "we wanted to move the applications to a new environment without much change. It

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Senior IT Manager
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At a Glance

■ Industry

Government—STLG

■ Location

USA

■ Challenge

With the purchase and implementation of a new ERP system, the City of Fort Worth looked to optimize its IT budget by moving a number of historical applications onto a new platform.

■ Solution

Micro Focus assisted the application move from the mainframe onto the Micro Focus platform on a distributed system. The Micro Focus solution was selected because it met the business requirements to accelerate service delivery, improve application flexibility and reduce IT costs.

■ Results

- + Business applications moved to lower cost, flexible platforms
- + Staff skilled up for ERP re-host project
- + Improved UI increases end-user productivity
- + Reduced IT costs

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was important to keep business rules intact, maintain user involvement, and keep the applications in the style that the users were familiar and productive with.” Rewriting the applications ran the risk of changing them and alienating the users of these systems. “By bringing everything over ‘as is’ we would continue to give the users everything they currently had,” he explains.

DeBoer and his department identified a third alternative—engaging with Micro Focus and a Systems Integrator to move the applications onto the Micro Focus® platform. The Micro Focus solution was selected because it met the business requirements to accelerate service delivery, improve application flexibility and reduce IT costs. Moving the applications to a distributed environment ahead of the main ERP project enabled DeBoer to maintain business continuity and quality of service for its end users.

Results

In the meantime a number of intangible benefits are already returning value to the City and DeBoer’s team. “Micro Focus and the distributed applications platform enables us to develop and debug programs faster—and get the modifications and enhancements into production quicker,” he explains. The effect on the development teams has been significant. “Probably the most important benefit,” continues DeBoer, “is the ability of the current staff members to learn new skills to help them

support this new application environment for our core business systems.” Moving the non-ERP applications has given the mainframe programmers a way to become familiar with the distributed environment and understand the differences between distributed environments and the mainframe.

In addition, the programmers are able to debug and resolve issues faster using modern integrated tools within the Micro Focus product. “In the long run, these new development tools will save us money and frustration,” explains DeBoer, “as less of the staff’s time is spent trying to identify what is wrong with the application.” End-users are also proving more productive as the user interface of the re-hosted applications is easier to handle.

Moving these applications to a distributed environment is something that could have been left to the end of the major ERP application modernization project. However, by identifying and moving these non-mission critical applications early, City of Fort Worth has been able to accomplish a number of milestones in preparation of the final modernization effort. As Mark DeBoer says, “To us, total success will occur when we complete phase two of the ERP migration in a couple of months. The work we have accomplished with Micro Focus has given us a mechanism to move the small number of remaining business applications to a distributed architecture.”



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