

City of Inglewood

Re-hosted an essential Computer Aided Dispatch system onto a Windows platform

Overview

As a gateway to major commercial centers of the United States and internationally, Inglewood is in a unique position on the shore of the Pacific Rim. It has a population of around 116,000. The City's reputation and its accessibility to major freeways and Los Angeles International Airport makes it an attractive business investment.

Challenge

The City had traditionally operated a majority of its large systems in a mainframe environment and relied on its team of five COBOL developers to build applications as required. Assistant City Manager and CIO, Michael D. Falkow aimed to reduce the City's reliance on the mainframe, and undertook a series of projects to move applications onto other platforms. The easiest option for many of the applications was to purchase commercial, off-the shelf packages. The integrated library system, for example, was

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replaced with a commercial system. Others required more thought and work.

Solution

After a four-year program, all but one of the applications had been moved. "The remaining application was the most mission critical," explains Falkow, "as it provided support for our 911 emergency dispatch call center. It was mission critical because it involved public safety, and we are a very active city with more than 250 calls for service each day." When a 911 call is received at one of the City's eight emergency control center desks, its details are transmitted instantly to LED displays in all 40 police patrol cars. Originally built by the in-house COBOL development team, the CAD system integrates with the City's Records Management System. When a patrol car attends an incident and investigates, a record is generated that goes into the Records Management System. This process enables the build up of intelligence that can be referenced and used proactively by police officers on patrol.

The CAD system is required 24/7, and data has to be transmitted as soon as the call is taken for the immediate dispatch of service. Downtime is not an option. "The mainframe system was incredibly reliable, incredibly fast, and incredibly accurate," says Falkow. However, the age of the mainframe made it increasingly difficult to



At a Glance

- **Industry**
Government—STLG
- **Location**
USA
- **Challenge**
The City needed to re-host a sophisticated Computer Aided Dispatch system for 911 emergency services running on its mainframe, as the age of the mainframe made it increasingly difficult to obtain replacement parts when components failed.
- **Products and Services**
Micro Focus Enterprise Developer
Micro Focus Enterprise Server
- **Success Highlights**
 - + Retained valuable and highly versatile custom-built functionality
 - + 99.99 percent availability preserved
 - + Saved over \$120K per annum in maintenance costs

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obtain replacement parts when components failed, and the City's CAD system faced the potential risk of catastrophic failure.

Falkow and his team looked at a range of options to overcome this challenge. Buying a commercial packaged solution meant compromising on functionality and risked sacrificing the years of intelligence built into the system, and it would have cost upwards of \$2 million. A more cost-effective project to convert the 500,000+ lines of COBOL code to Windows was attempted, but this ran into problems when, after a year and a half of development, implementing a Microsoft patch caused the code on the .NET server to fail, taking eight hours to fix. "For a system that demands 99.99 percent reliability, and operators who are used to this level of availability, this was simply far too risky for us to contemplate rolling out into production," says Falkow. "We had to admit defeat." At that point, Falkow brought in Micro Focus to move the application in its entirety, from DOS/VSE on the mainframe to Micro Focus Enterprise Server on Windows Server. "Micro Focus really helped save the day," says Falkow. "They delivered a solution that helps aid the security of our citizens and at the same time retains our 99.99 percent fault resilience."

Results

The application now runs on two Windows servers, one for production and one for development. Ongoing development is minimal and is done directly against the development Windows server using Enterprise Developer via remote desktop. The production environment for the application is a Windows Server running Micro Focus Enterprise Server. Around 50 terminals connect to the production server along with in-car console displays and emergency control center desks.

For Falkow, a key success factor was the relationship between the two organizations, "The strength of the partnership between Micro Focus and the City of Inglewood helped get us over the hurdles," he explains. "That and our shared determination to make this project a success was the perfect set of ingredients. We couldn't tolerate another failure and owed it to the people of Inglewood to protect their security."

The City of Inglewood now benefits from a robust and resilient CAD system which continues to deliver the functionality that is so important to the emergency response services of the City.