

# Irish Life

Optimizing the operating environment and modernizing core applications to reduce operating costs and enable future innovation.

## Overview

The Irish Life Group is Ireland's leading life and Pensions Company. It has more than 2,000 staff and a million customers. It has served the people of Ireland with risk protection, pensions, savings and investment products since 1939.

## Challenge

Irish Life reviewed its application portfolio—including supporting hardware and software—with a view to modernizing IT applications, platforms and processes to tackle long-term cost challenges and ensure it was competitive, cost effective and agile enough to support future business demands.

The Irish Life portfolio was a complex web of interlinked CICS and batch applications. The key insurance systems were all built around CLOAS, a heavily-customized version of a CSC package with unique intellectual property captured in over three million lines of COBOL

**“We were unusual in that we wanted to go beyond a standard ‘lift and shift’ and embrace modernization.”**

## BARRY RYAN

Chief Technical Architect  
Irish Life

code, as well as a number of home-grown satellite systems supporting the CLOAS system.

Moving CLOAS epitomized the wider challenge around its application portfolio—to rewrite, or move to an alternative package or environment. The Irish Life team had plenty of on- and off-mainframe experience themselves and, keen to make a well-informed decision, drew on internal and external expertise to understand how they could best meet their modernization objectives.

Irish Life concluded that preserving and reusing the IP within CLOAS was essential, but some modernization to move data from their IMS hierarchical database to a SQL Server relational database would bring significant benefits.

## Solution

Reusing the COBOL code base also meant Irish Life retained its subject matter experts, enabling the IT team to perform most of the modernization and optimization work themselves. However, it did need the help of a strong technology partner to move the applications to the new target environment, while providing the productive platform that would deliver future innovation.

“In our research Micro Focus® came up again and again as the platform of choice for



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## At a Glance

### ■ Industry

Financial Services

### ■ Location

Republic of Ireland

### ■ Challenge

Irish Life reviewed its application portfolio—including supporting hardware and software—with a view to modernizing IT applications, platforms and processes to tackle long-term cost challenges and ensure it was competitive, cost effective and agile enough to support future business demands.

### ■ Solution

Using Micro Focus Enterprise solutions to preserve and reuse the IP, but introduce some modernization to move data from their IMS hierarchical database to a SQL Server relational database.

### ■ Results

- + Optimized environment to run mainframe applications
- + Significant operating cost reduction
- + Increased flexibility
- + Improved, more agile development environment and processes

**“In our research Micro Focus came up again and again as the platform of choice for mainframe application modernization projects offering excellent COBOL compatibility and mainframe feature emulation.”**

**BARRY RYAN**

Chief Technical Architect  
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mainframe application modernization projects offering excellent COBOL compatibility and mainframe feature emulation”, said Ryan, “We were not disappointed.”

So what did Shane Tallant, CLOAS Development Manager, and his team learn from the process? “Go in with your eyes open. It’s a big challenge that must be broken down into achievable goals.”

“Our database has been re-engineered, and we’re prepared for the innovations that will deliver value in the future.

While this solution won’t work for everyone, it’s definitely worth considering if the cost of 3rd party software is proving excessive and you have access to your application source code. We would do it again, but with the benefit of hindsight, there are two things that would have made it easier for us.

**One:** Don’t underestimate the effort and complexity of migrating the niche components—in our case legacy PL/I, Easytrieve and utilities.

**Two:** Spend more time up-front weeding out redundant programs, files and jobs to avoid unnecessary testing and moving.”

## Results

The three-to-five year investment program Irish Life predicted has already been delivered

at less than the predicted cost—and a planned increase in policies under management has already improved the ROI. Reusing COBOL within the Visual Studio IDE framework made upskilling the team of 26 developers simpler. More importantly, it made it easier to attract new talent, with no previous COBOL experience into the team.

Capital expenditure has been reduced and the successful relaunch of the CLOAS application, now re-engineered to .NET, has improved efficiencies: some batch processes are much faster and a typical CLOAS batch window can be completed in an hour, rather than four. Ryan comments: “This provides us with flexibility around extending our core business operating hours (as the database is read-only during the batch), will reduce the need for out-of-hours cover and removes the risk of early morning system unavailability.”

Problem-solving has also improved. Developers working in the new environment are locating issues much faster and much earlier than in the previous environment. “We use Visual Studio for everything we do in other languages and using a consistent IDE framework for our COBOL means our whole development team is delivering higher quality code in shorter timeframes”, Cooper explained.



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