

INSURING FUTURE PROGRESS WITH VISUAL COBOL

Innovation delivers low-risk application modernization policy



Customer: Market leading independent life insurance group in pan-Asia
 Industry: Insurance
 Country: China

Highlights

- Effective application reuse strategy
- Fast, intuitive tools for COBOL app development and maintenance
- Improved developer efficiency
- Comparatively low risk, low cost development solution

“Developer efficiency has improved through Visual COBOL’s user-friendly and modern application development environment. It has allowed our programmers to interact in a natural and intuitive manner, thereby enhancing our COBOL development process”.

Solution

- Visual COBOL for Visual Studio

Challenge

In line with a corporate strategy to standardize on the Microsoft .NET platform, the customer wanted to optimize its key application portfolio. This would include its bespoke billing and payment application, Compass, indispensable to more than 100 employees in more than 10 Asian sites.

Compass was developed using COBOL, and while the company was strategically committed to COBOL as a development language, the company needed to look to the future. They were looking for a more productive and contemporary application development toolset that embraced Microsoft technologies to support its long-term IT roadmap.

But the team also needed to preserve what it already had: It wanted to ensure all its COBOL expertise and investment could be leveraged in a new, modern, industry-standard development environment.

Rewrite or reuse?

It looked at rewriting or replacing the Compass application but this proved to be prohibitively expensive, both in terms of money and time to market. It also risked losing the functionality and competitive advantage built into the system over many years. As an insurer, it understands the importance of risk and replacing or rewriting Compass was deemed unacceptable.

The company turned to Micro Focus to investigate the possibility of reusing the existing application logic and early discussions resulted in a proof-of-concept using Visual COBOL, to test stability and compatibility. This exercise proved that application output would be consistent with current results.

The integration between Visual COBOL and the Microsoft Visual Studio IDE and the Microsoft .NET framework was a key factor in the decision process. A spokesperson explains its importance: “Our development teams were already very familiar with Visual Studio. This close integration means that our COBOL development teams can collaborate and interact smoothly with other development teams within our organization without the need to learn a new development language.”

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Increased developer efficiency

After a period of development and testing, the Visual COBOL-based solution is now in production. The spokesperson comments: "Developer efficiency has already improved by 10% in the early stages through the user-friendly and modern application development environment. These efficiencies are gained through the many developer aids within Visual COBOL for Visual Studio as well as the COBOL language integration within this modern IDE. These capabilities enable our developers to interact with Visual COBOL in a natural and intuitive manner, thereby enhancing our COBOL application debugging process."

It is still early days for Visual COBOL, but the company expects it will be easier to maintain and support current applications by standardizing its development processes with this solution.

Lower risk and cost savings

Visual COBOL enabled the customer to fully leverage its current COBOL expertise and application investment, while modernizing its development processes and embracing the Microsoft platform strategy. It plans to deliver the Compass application via a mobile user interface in the near future, giving customers direct access to their policy and account details from any mobile device.

Replacing Compass would have been a risky and expensive project. The spokesperson concludes: "Using Micro Focus Visual COBOL we can reuse our business-critical COBOL application, which for us is by far the lowest risk route in taking this application into the future. We look forward to implementing additional capabilities within Visual COBOL further improving our customer experience."

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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