RAET Part 1
Raet increases mainframe developers’ productivity and lowers costs

Challenge
To lower the cost and increase the productivity of mainframe salary processing application, Gemal, using tools attractive to today’s software engineers.

Solution
› Micro Focus Enterprise Developer

RAET
Raet delivers solutions for salary and personnel administration and processes payroll for some two million Dutch employees. In the non-profit market, the COBOL application Gemal (Municipal and General Salary system), which runs on a mainframe, has been in use for several decades.

The challenge
Raet’s systems for payroll processing require a great deal of maintenance effort as they have to function in an extremely dynamic environment. Changes of rules and regulations in collective labor agreements result in new system requirements which need to be developed, tested and implemented.

“Gemal processes salaries for approximately 1,000 employers in health care, social services and local governments, as well as privatized government institutions such as TPG, Essent and Nuon. In total, the system deals with the salaries of millions of employees,” said Bert de Ruiter, product development manager at Raet.

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Bert de Ruiter,
Product Development Manager,
Raet
and cost-effectively as possible. As this is a knowledge-intensive activity, this makes employee retention even more critical.

“To make these activities more attractive for our employees we started looking for a modern and powerful development environment. With Micro Focus Enterprise Developer, we have succeeded in achieving these goals,” de Ruiter continued.

**The solution**

The implementation of Micro Focus Enterprise Developer was reasonably well in line with Raet planning, although the existing LAN infrastructure had to be expanded to be able to deal with the new development workload. “The system for version management also required adjustments to guarantee that both on the LAN and on the mainframe, the same version is used. As Micro Focus supports version management, it does not make any difference where the source code is changed, because in both environments – mainframe and LAN – the most recent version is available,” de Ruiter said.

To quickly migrate data from both environments, Raet needed an emulator for a connection with the IDMS database environment. Although the emulator – which was designed by Micro Focus partner MigrationWare – has functioned well, Raet will soon start using the IBM DB2 database, which takes away the need of the intermediate step through the emulator. After the transfer to the DB2 database is completed, Raet will continue using Micro Focus Enterprise Developer.

**The result**

According to de Ruiter, choosing Micro Focus, Raet has reached its main objective. “First of all we have succeeded in getting the work of the software engineer for COBOL out of the green screen environment. Until recently it was difficult to find COBOL developers. The well-known graphical look-and-feel of Micro Focus Enterprise Developer, in combination with the practical functionality and tools, offer an attractive working environment, which is also interesting to recently graduated students.”

For Gemal’s mainframe support, Raet leases external computing and storage capacity. The capacity used is measured by means of RPP (Relative Processor Power/Performance), a number which represents the use of CPU time per time unit. Before Raet had implemented Micro Focus solutions, they used approximately 30 RPP on an annual basis in the development environment. Now that development activities have been decentralized and take place on Raet’s LAN, this figure has been reduced to 25, resulting in considerable cost savings.

“With Micro Focus Enterprise Developer, the developers work in an intuitive and user-friendly environment offering options like drag and drop. The tools automate a number of time-consuming manual actions. Therefore, testing and debugging is faster and more efficient. To make a comparison, tests on the LAN server are eight times faster, on average, than tests on the mainframe. Further, Micro Focus Enterprise Developer analysis tools provide graphical insight into the application and enable impact analyses. This enlarges the predictability of the application, resulting in even more time and cost savings,” de Ruiter said.

“Micro Focus Enterprise Developer not only offers powerful analysis tools but also provides insight into the size of the application. This data can serve as critical management information. The number of code lines enables me to estimate Gemal’s complexity. This provides a clear picture of, for example, the number of developers required to carry out specific maintenance activities. This, combined with the productivity improvement and cost savings on mainframe capacity, makes it clear that Micro Focus is the right choice for us,” de Ruiter concluded.

Raet has moved their professional legacy software engineers out of the traditional green screen environment. Micro Focus’ intuitive, user-friendly LAN development environment provides an attractive working environment that saves on mainframe costs. Efficient development and maintenance through powerful tools has lead to improved productivity, better insight into the application, and availability of realtime management information, based on analysis reporting.
Part 1 of the Raet story outlines how the company used Micro Focus technology to increase mainframe developer productivity and lower costs whilst still deploying the application back to the mainframe. Part 2 continues the story outlining how Raet were then able to take their mainframe application and deploy onto an alternative platform increasing flexibility and saving money.