

SNS BANK: PARTNERSHIP DELIVERS SUCCESSFUL MODERNIZATION

Micro Focus' future-proof infrastructure significantly reduces business risk



URL: www.snsbank.nl
 Industry: Financial Services
 Country: The Netherlands

Highlights

- Significantly reduced business risk
- Improved developer productivity
- Future-proof IT infrastructure
- Single, consolidated development environment

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Alex Pot,
 Head of Application Development Core Banking,
 SNS Bank

At a Glance: SNS Bank

One of the top four banks in The Netherlands, SNS Bank is part of the SNS Reaal group, providing financial services, including mortgages, insurance, bank accounts, investments and pensions through a variety of award-winning brands. The bank was founded in 1817 and holds €70 billion in assets.

Solution

- Micro Focus Visual COBOL for Eclipse
- Micro Focus COBOL Server

Challenge

For more than 25 years, SNS Bank has relied on its core banking application. This system runs on a Unisys mainframe and is used by nearly all of its 5,000 employees every day. It processes all client and user transactions and connects the online banking facility to its back end systems. All the SNS Reaal companies use the application which integrates all the key systems.

Since the advent of the internet, the bank has seen a steady rise in online transaction volumes, raising concerns regarding the readiness of the Unisys mainframe to cope with this increased business demand, as Ramakant Patki, Head of IT Infrastructure and Operations, explains: “The performance of the Unisys mainframe was actually very good, but we were conscious that Unisys’ mainframe market share is diminishing and therefore we have to assume that expertise and support will be more difficult to source in the future. This was at a time when we were looking carefully at our staffing levels and it was clear that our Unisys experts would be retiring within the near future. Our business continuity is of paramount importance and we felt it was time for us to rethink our whole IT infrastructure and adapt to a more modern and dynamic world where we could foster collaboration between development teams while retaining a high-performance core banking system. We were looking for a solution to help us transition and turned to IBM and Micro Focus.”

Extensive research and testing

IBM was chosen to manage the move from Unisys to a distributed environment. As this was a considerable effort, involving 2.8 million lines of code and a sizeable DMS II database, an environment was introduced to test all major components. SNS Bank had previous

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experience with Micro Focus Server Express, during a pilot project when it had successfully converted a small, stand-alone application. This experience, coupled with Micro Focus' market-leading position and the promising future enhancements of the COBOL language, confirmed the choice for Micro Focus.

The large modernization project began with the automatic conversion of 95% of the current COBOL code, using the Micro Focus COBOL solution. The remaining code was rewritten to C++ and COBOL. All DMS II data was automatically converted, using the Micro Focus DataBridge technology, to Oracle and a new framework, based on C++, was developed for the core banking system.

The testing process was extensive, involving up to 40 developers for many months. More than 150 people were involved in the actual move from Unisys MCP to IBM AIX, ensuring all the business process integration with associated systems was thoroughly tested before the go-live.

Successful team effort

IBM managed the architecture and design, the development of the re-platform components and the data interface modules, with Micro Focus facilitating in an advisory role. Over the course of the modernization project, IBM phased control back to SNS Bank. At that point, Micro Focus became more heavily involved in software configuration, Software Development Life Cycle implementation and performance optimization. The result was a successful transfer to a distributed environment, with excellent performance levels and full adherence to current Service Level Agreements.

Streamlining development with Visual COBOL

SNS Bank is now moving its development efforts to Micro Focus Visual COBOL for Eclipse. Alex Pot, Head of Application Development Core Banking, comments: "We want to streamline our development and standardize on a single environment so that our team of 25 COBOL developers can collaborate more

effectively. Visual COBOL is a natural next step for us and we can see many benefits, including superior debugging capabilities which will enable earlier fault detection. We expect to see efficiency gains as well as a rise in developer productivity levels."

The Visual COBOL environment offers smart editing and debugging, enabling developers to manage complex problems easier and faster than before. Visual COBOL will be used with the Development Hub, enabling developers to debug remotely on UNIX from the Eclipse environment. This makes early fault detection and correction easier enabling higher quality standards for application development efforts.

A platform for the future

Ramakant Patki concludes: "Moving our core banking system to a distributed environment has drastically reduced our business risk and has given us a path to the future. The support we've received from Micro Focus during the process has been great. We've really only had a few issues, but those were resolved quickly and proficiently. The Micro Focus Visual COBOL solution will give us improved fault management, greater development productivity, and a platform for future innovation."

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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