

SPEARS & ASSOCIATES: NEW MARKET POTENTIAL REALIZED THROUGH APPLICATION MODERNIZATION

Visual COBOL upgrade accelerates time to market



At a glance: Spears & Associates, Inc.

Spears & Associates provides the item processing industry with software development and technical consulting services. Its key solution, Float Pricing/Analysis System (FPAS), has been in service since 1984.

Solution

- Micro Focus Visual COBOL for Visual Studio
- Micro Focus COBOL Server

Challenge

Medium and large banking clients use FPAS to process customer bank deposits and assign float and pricing values to items for the deposit posting system. Those values are then reported on in different ways to the end user, to measure the monetary impact of the deposit on the financial institution. The system has been in use for some 30 years and was written in Micro Focus COBOL. Micro Focus Net Express was used for COBOL development.

A number of Spears & Associates banking customers were planning upgrades to Windows 7. This created a business driver to upgrade FPAS as well, as Kevin Peters, Vice President at Spears & Associates, explains: "Some of our customers were moving off XP platforms due to compliance and platform support issues. Of course we need to keep up with technology so we saw an opportunity to upgrade both our development environment and offer new platform support for the FPAS system."

An easy move to Visual COBOL

Having had a prior track record of success working with Micro Focus COBOL, Peters immediately turned to Micro Focus to discuss his business requirements. Visual COBOL was introduced and an upgrade journey quickly started. The 102 COBOL programs and 251 copybooks within the FPAS system needed transitioning to the Visual COBOL environment and Spears opted to modernize application access during the upgrade process. A new user interface (UI) built using Microsoft Windows Forms replaced the existing UI. Much of the existing application logic was repurposed during the upgrade process, as Peters explains: "The transition to Visual COBOL was made easier because we were able to reuse substantial parts of the current code which was a massive time saver for us. Most of our core COBOL business logic was easily converted to Visual COBOL."



URL: www.saisoftware.com
 Industry: Financial Services
 Country: USA

Highlights

- Opened up a new market segment
- In-house upgrade from Net Express to Visual COBOL
- Extensive application logic reuse saves time
- Improved developer productivity

"Moving to Visual COBOL has given us access to an entirely new market segment, as well as a wealth of knowledge in a set of technologies with wide general acceptance. Visual COBOL has made our core applications easier to maintain and improved our developer productivity."

Kevin Peters,
 Vice President, Spears & Associates, Inc.



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Micro Focus Developer Community to the rescue

Spears & Associates used internal resources to make the move to Visual COBOL, requiring little or no formal support from Micro Focus and Peters turned to the Micro Focus Developer Community when he needed assistance: "These guys are just excellent, the best in the industry. They were quick to respond and I've never had an issue that they couldn't help with."

Tapping into new market potential

The old version of FPAS, which served a variety of customers, had some mainframe elements. Obviously this meant that FPAS could only support a mainframe-based client base in its current form. Adopting a flexible solution with Visual COBOL meant that Spears & Associates' clients do not need a particular server footprint, providing greater potential market reach. The company realized that moving FPAS to a new Windows environment and removing the application dependencies on the mainframe opened up new sales opportunities with medium to smaller size banks. Peters: "Since the move to Visual COBOL we've successfully implemented FPAS on a Windows 7 platform at a new banking client and we are now working with a number of new prospects."

Plans for the future

Peters concludes: "We are preparing to move another key application (AIRRS – Research and Adjustment System) onto Visual COBOL. Clients who have already moved to the Windows FPAS system are delighted with the ease and speed of the transition. Moving to Visual COBOL has given us access to an entirely new market segment, as well as a wealth of knowledge in a set of technologies with wide general acceptance. Visual COBOL has made our core applications easier to maintain and improved our developer productivity."

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