



USA Truck, Inc.

Challenge

USA Truck, Inc. wanted to find a more cost-effective alternative to maintaining applications on an IBM mainframe. The challenge was fulfilling the company's desire to use existing development skills while ensuring the transition to a new platform was as transparent to the end user as possible.

Solution

- Micro Focus® Studio Enterprise Edition™
- Micro Focus® Server Enterprise Edition™

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Globally, the transportation industry is highly competitive and every ounce of customer satisfaction counts. This is especially true in the United States, where USA Truck, Inc. operates. Headquartered in Van Buren, Arkansas, the dry van truckload carrier operates a truckload fleet transporting general commodities throughout the continental U.S., as well as into and out of Canada and Mexico.

Technology plays an important role in the company's operations, enabling it to provide its growing customer base with customized transportation solutions – including integration with partner carriers. As Les Bicknell, Application Support Manager for USA Truck, Inc., explains, "The technology we use in our business is vital to all aspects of our operations."

Industry driven by cost and quality

Retaining a competitive advantage in the U.S. transportation industry involves offering customers a freight solution that is safe, modern, reliable and competitively priced. It is critical to have rates that enable customers to take advantage of the carrier's capacity and service levels without compromising the customers' transportation budget. "Our customers put their company's reputation for quality in our hands; we have to honor that by delivering their products safely and on time," Bicknell says. To address these challenges, USA Truck, Inc. has implemented new technologies such as satellite equipment tracking and close integration with its third-party partners. Because of the high cost of maintaining applications on its IBM mainframe, the company charged the IT department with finding alternatives.

"Cost is always a concern in our industry," explains Bicknell, "and it was a primary driver in our decision to find an alternative, more cost-effective way to offer the services provided by our mainframe applications. It didn't make good business sense to keep paying for mainframe-related hardware and software licensing and maintenance, given there were less costly alternatives available."

Highlights

- Annual mainframe costs significantly reduced
- Migration fully achieved by in-house team
- Improved reporting and Business Intelligence capabilities

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Chris Odle,
Senior Systems Analyst,
USA Truck, Inc.



Increasing IT costs were a concern

Over the years, USA Truck, Inc. had built up a substantial mainframe application footprint of approximately 28 million lines of COBOL and Assembler code, 1.5 TB of data held within DB2, VSAM and flat files, and more than 1,200 CICS/BMS screens. The applications were hosted on an IBM 2086 model 6160, 156 MIPS (Millions of Instructions per Second) mainframe and were developed in-house to perform various functions. "We looked at alternative ways of reducing the cost of operating the applications and decided that rehosting them 'as is' would deliver the best return on investment and enable us to reduce annual mainframe cost," Bicknell explains. Based on USA Truck, Inc.'s findings after reviewing the market, the solution offered by Micro Focus was the most acceptable. "Essentially, we were looking for a way to modernize our applications as well as reduce costs," says Chris Odle, Senior Systems Analyst with USA Truck, Inc. "Micro Focus covered all of our requirements and was the least intrusive in terms of changes to the systems." The ROI figures of the Micro Focus solution also got the approval of the company's decision-makers. "When we showed them the numbers involved and told them the expected ROI, we quickly got buy-in from the business," says Bicknell. The IT team went to work rehosting the applications from the IBM mainframe to a single quad core Xeon processor virtualized server running the Microsoft Windows Server operating system. This involved migrating the DB2 to Microsoft SQL and conversion of the VSAM and flat file data to the Micro Focus file format. The entire migration was conducted in-house over a 15-month period. "The project could have been completed much quicker, in 8 to 10 months, but other high-priority initiatives temporarily diverted the resources," Bicknell says. "I was very pleased with the successful outcome. We did not experience any major issues. It was a non-event for the end users, but provided savings for the company."

Consistent availability

Application availability since rehosting has remained the same as on the mainframe at 99.9 percent and performance levels have been retained. "Features within the Micro Focus technology, like code animation, improve our testing capabilities," says Odle, "which in turn improves the quality and deployment time of any changes we make to the applications. SQL-based data is also easier to access, which improves our reporting and BI capabilities." In addition to achieving reduced annual mainframe costs, USA Truck, Inc. was able to improve both the speed and quality of its application service delivery.

A platform for the future

USA Truck, Inc. should find it easier to acquire skilled technicians to meet its IT resource requirements. "We have a very skilled, talented team that used Micro Focus products to deliver a significant business change on time and within budget," Bicknell explains, "and by hosting our applications on a more modern platform, we are less dependent solely on mainframe skill sets, which can be tough to find. It should be easier to recruit people with a more modern set of skills."

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As a transportation company operating in a highly competitive environment, it is imperative for USA Truck, Inc. to have applications that are accessible and able to deliver what the end users need. There is also a community of third parties and customers who rely on the data USA Truck, Inc. provides. By modernizing its applications and the platforms on which they reside, USA Truck, Inc. has improved the functioning and efficiency of our IT operations.

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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