The County of San Luis Obispo (SLO)

SLO unlocks business-critical application with Micro Focus™ Visual COBOL, realizing improved business agility and substantial cost savings.

Overview

The County of San Luis Obispo (SLO) is located in the U.S. state of California. It is home to close to 300,000 residents.

Challenge

Just like in any other USA county, a property tax system is critical to SLO's ability to bill for and collect taxes. Tax revenues are then distributed to school districts, county departments, and agencies serving the public. In SLO, 130,000 properties are liable to tax.

SLO custom-developed a COBOL-based property tax system during the 1970s. For the last four decades, this has served the county well, meeting its very unique requirements. As automation within SLO increased and the county's

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SHAWN SHURICK
IT Project Manager
SLO

IT direction moved towards a Windows environment, some isolated applications remained on the county's mainframe. Don Stever, IT Supervisor for the county, comments: "Our mainframe environment was expensive to maintain and support and, more importantly, our team of mainframe application developers was aging. It's not easy to find mainframe development skills and we needed to move our property tax system onto a more flexible platform, in line with our strategic IT direction."

The county considered an emulation solution but an additional software layer to maintain and update was not desired, and it wouldn't provide the architectural flexibility to modernize the system. Tiburon Technologies had previous relevant experience and successfully put forward a proposal which included Micro Focus™ COBOL for Visual Studio by OpenText™ as the core component of its application re-hosting solution.

Solution

Business continuity was vital, so this project had to be prepared and executed very carefully. To ensure the support of all its users, SLO treated the effort as a business project and involved heavy end-user participation. Users were divided into subject matter expert groups and produced hundreds of very specific,

At a Glance

■ **Industry**
Government

■ **Location**
U.S.A.

■ **Challenge**
Faced with increasing application infrastructure costs and complexity and an aging mainframe development team, SLO decided to re-host a business-critical application from a mainframe platform to a modern, flexible, and cost-effective Windows environment, in line with the county's strategic direction.

■ **Products and Services**
Micro Focus™ COBOL for Visual Studio
Micro Focus™ COBOL Server

■ **Success Highlights**
+ Business continuity guaranteed
+ Realized long-term annual savings of $580,000
+ Modern toolset makes it easier to attract new talent
+ Improved business agility with higher quality solutions

well-documented test cases, used to verify the accuracy of the code conversion. The project could then be broken down into manageable segments in which almost every conceivable business process was tested repeatedly in specifically designed virtual environments.

Just before the contract was signed, Tiburon Technologies was acquired by EMC which initially worried Stever: "We were very invested in the vendor's technical team and wanted the same people to stay on the project. I needn't have worried, as EMC understood the importance and time-criticality of this project and made the transition very smooth, culminating in a successful go-live."

EMC developed the technology to re-host legacy CICS applications into .NET, leveraging existing OpenText™ ASP.NET support within Micro Focus™ COBOL for Visual Studio by OpenText™. This allowed SLO to run entirely within the .NET framework without emulation.

Stever comments: "We follow a Microsoft IT strategy and have found that the Visual COBOL toolset dovetails very nicely into this. It streamlines application development and testing, and provides superior debugging capabilities over the original environment. We expect that the modern toolset will also make it easier for us to attract and retain skilled application developers."

Although the move to a Windows platform did not include any functional changes, new development that has been long overdue is now

much more achievable and future enhancements to improve the user interface can now be realistically planned.

Results
Business agility was improved as problems can be replicated faster so fixes are deployed quicker. The improved testing ability results in higher quality solutions.

The annual licence, maintenance, and support costs associated with the mainframe environment was $580,000, as Shawn Shurick, IT Project Manager and now Applications Manager at SLO, explains: "Moving to an existing Windows platform, with easier data access, means SLO is able to realize immediate savings. A project of this size does not just happen and some additional costs need to be offset against our annual saving in the short term, but we can confidently say that in the long term this project will save the county $580,000 each year, as well as give us a future-proof platform for growth. "With help from EMC and Micro Focus (now part of OpenText™) we have unlocked a very mature application in a modern development environment and it has given us the business agility we wanted."

Daniel Milei, IT Director at SLO concludes: "The spotlight was on us, with other counties facing similar challenges and wanting to see how this pioneering approach to retire an old platform while safeguarding four decades' worth of business rules would work. With unrelenting executive support, dedicated teams and trust in IT's ability to execute, this project should become

a model for other counties. Furthermore, through their commitment to customer service and subject matter expertise, EMC and Micro Focus (now part of OpenText™) proved to be the right partners for this major initiative."

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