CA-IDMS to DB2 Conversion - ASR

When a business critical mainframe system was identified as having high operational costs, Dutch insurance group ASR sought the advice of TSG Software. Thanks to industry experience and relationships TSG were able to recommend a solution that would allow these cost reductions to be achieved, without having to migrate the entire mainframe system.

About ASR

ASR is one of the largest insurers in The Netherlands, with over 4,000 employees and revenue of €4.3 billion in 2012. They provide private and business clients with a range of insurance products including pensions, life, non-life, health and disability insurance. They also offer services in the mortgage and banking sectors through a number of associated brands, and are active in real estate.

THE PROBLEM

One of ASR's major business units, the Life Insurance division, uses a mainframe system known as HLS-C to run many of the operational functions of the business unit. HLS-C was historically run on CA IDMS, a network database management system for mainframes. However, the licensing costs

Problem
• **High licensing costs of CA IDMS**

Solution
• **Conversion of IDMS to DB2**
• **Use of Data Access Layer to emulate existing calls**

Benefits
• **Elimination of IDMS licence costs**
• **New, modern DB2 DBMS at a fraction of the cost**

for CA IDMS were proving to be too high to justify, and ASR sought an alternative DBMS to underpin the operations of the Life Insurance division, that would drastically reduce the operational costs.

THE SOLUTION

Since HLS-C was still very much in use, migrating it to a new platform was not a viable option. ASR consulted TSG Software, an existing partner who had helped ASR successfully convert from CA-Telon to Casegen on a separate project. Thanks to their years of industry experience TSG were able to advise ASR to convert their DBMS from IDMS to DB2, rather than migrating to a new platform.

The benefit of converting the DBMS over migrating HLS-C to an entirely new platform was that the high licensing costs of CA IDMS would be avoided, without having to perform a full scale platform migration that might have affected the operation of the Life Insurance business. TSG worked with an experienced conversion specialist partner named Ateras and leveraged their IDMS conversion technology, DB Shuttle, for the conversion, working closely with them throughout the conversion process.

One of the challenges in performing a DBMS conversion can be that the old DBMS uses a proprietary 4GL programming language, whereas more modern ones use Cobol CICS. This was the case for ASR where the CA IDMS had used ADS/Online, and DB2 uses CICS Cobol. In the majority of cases it was very straightforward to convert the old ADS/Online programs into the new language. However, in the case of the existing Cobol programs that called the IDMS Database, the developers involved took the decision to use a Data Access Layer. This meant that the existing calls in the Cobol programs remained unchanged and continued to operate as they had previously, only this time the calls were made into the Data Access Layer which converted the calls to SQL and managed the responses to the application.

This decision to use a Data Access Layer significantly reduced the cost of testing, as programs that otherwise would have

needed to be converted to SQL remained exactly as they were – unchanged. Every program that is converted has to be fully tested, so eliminating the need to convert the calls meant that the overall number of programs to be tested was greatly reduced.

THE OUTCOME

Within 1.5 years all of ASR's programs and databases were fully converted, tested and moved into the production environment. CA IDMS was no longer needed, and the annual licensing costs for that product were therefore eliminated. Not only was the conversion a great success, but ASR also noted how the support after go live from both TSG and Ateras had been excellent, and that both parties had been very reliable partners throughout the process.
The new DBMS that ASR had been provided with was a modern, relational system that had equivalent resource usage to the previous solution, but cost only a fraction of CA IDMS.

IN SUMMARY

ASR eliminated the high licensing costs of CA IDMS by converting it to DB2. The decision to do this was influenced by TSG Software, who understood that migrating the HLS-C system entirely to a new platform was not a viable option. Thanks to their industry experience TSG were able to recommend Ateras to do the DBMS conversion, and worked alongside them throughout the process.

The expertise of the developers from both parties involved in the conversion allowed for innovative solutions to be introduced that significantly reduced the testing requirement (and therefore the time of completion) of the conversion. ASR were very satisfied with the cost savings, and also with the service provided throughout the conversion and after go live.