

Generali USA raises productivity by standardizing on IBM platform.

Overview

■ Challenge

Improve decision making and lower IT costs by streamlining multiplatform information management infrastructure

■ Solution

Migration of multiple databases to IBM DB2® Universal Database™

■ Why IBM?

Under former ownership, the company had long relied on the IBM mainframe, and of all the database platforms it researched, the company identified DB2 on the mainframe as the most reliable offering available

■ Key Benefits

Consolidation on DB2 frees DBAs and other IT staff for more value-added work; other staff can make better business decisions by using modern query tools with DB2; performance of DB2 exceeds expectations; costs, especially with Linux, have decreased; productivity of DBAs has increased due to DB2 Tools



Needing to standardize on a database platform that would enable it to grow while saving costs, Generali USA turned to IBM DB2 Universal Database.

Like the insurance companies they cover, reinsurance firms seek to limit their losses and other costs in order to show a profit at the end of the day. That's why companies like Generali USA Life Reassurance Company (Generali USA) are turning to cost-effective IT systems that enable them to manage business processes more efficiently and exploit their data for better decision making.

Generali USA, headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri, is the former life reinsurance division of Business Men's Assurance Company (BMA). With 135 employees, the company is a leading

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– Jim Hunt, Manager, Database Services, Generali USA Life Reassurance Company

Rapidly implementing low-cost on demand solutions

Key Components

Software

- IBM DB2 Universal Database
- IBM DB2 Connect™
- IBM DB2 Administration Tool
- IBM DB2 High Performance Unload
- ISI 2BDB2/Dataconverter
- ISI 2BDB2/Transparency

Hardware

- IBM @server® zSeries®

provider of individual and group reinsurance products and services in the U.S. After Generali USA's parent company retained the Reinsurance operations while selling off BMA, the newly formed U.S. subsidiary took stock of its inherited IT systems and concluded that it had to revamp its information management infrastructure to better support its bottom line.

Generali USA's mixed environment of CA-Datcom and Oracle databases failed on several counts to serve the company's strategic needs going forward. Not only was the CA-Datcom software difficult to query, integrate and maintain, the mixture of platforms in general led to the growth of information silos that raised maintenance costs and slowed the process of product changes and application development.

"Since we had so many different database platforms, it was a challenge for our IT staff to collaborate," says Myron Lutz, vice president of IT, Generali USA. "Our Web teams couldn't communicate with the data warehouse team and aggregating data for advanced querying to improve efficiency and better serve our customers was out of the question."

Turning to IBM, the company decided to migrate its separate information management systems to IBM DB2 Universal Database. "We know DB2 is a stable product, and it's backed by IBM development, so we can depend on it for the long term," says Lutz. "And DB2 is not only an industry leader, it also has the advantage of performing to very high standards on the IBM mainframe. We had worked with the IBM mainframe for at least two decades, and we were very pleased with its stability and performance. When you combine DB2 with the mainframe, you have a powerful, integrated offering."

Gaining productivity with DB2

With its DB2 solution, the IT staff has been able to shift resources from writing reports to developing new applications, adding value instead of maintaining disparate — and in some cases outmoded — systems. In addition, Generali USA has a large range of database management tools it can choose from to help cut down the drudgery and cost of many tasks required of database administrators (DBAs). "We chose DB2 Tools over competing tools primarily because they represent a better value for us," says Jim Hunt, manager, database services, Generali USA.

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Former platform	New platform	Business processes served
CA-Datcom on IBM mainframe	DB2 on IBM mainframe	Genesys: new business, underwriting, administration, accounting, financial reporting
Oracle on IBM AIX®	DB2 on Linux/Intel	Actuarial data warehouse with mortality data for statistical analysis and trend reporting
Oracle on Microsoft® Windows®	DB2 on IBM mainframe	Client server, Web applications, transaction processing systems, and claims and treaty systems

Generali USA has migrated three disparate database systems to DB2 Universal Database.

For instance, the company is using IBM DB2 Administration Tool to automate numerous scheduled maintenance tasks and IBM DB2 High Performance Unload to quickly move data. “These two tools working together have significantly improved the productivity of Generali USA’s DBA team and reduced overall database management costs,” says Hunt.

Furthermore, application teams within the IT department can now collaborate on projects since they all have access to the same information, which leads to additional improvements in productivity. “Yet another major improvement is the depth of DB2 expertise in the industry,” says Lutz. “You go to a book store and there are shelves of books on DB2, and there’s nothing like that for CA-Datcom. In terms of being able to recruit talented DBAs to keep our team staffed, we now have a wealth of DB2 skills to choose from that we never had before, as well as a large portfolio of DB2 Tools that we can choose from to help us manage our database efficiently as our business grows.”

Open standards open wealth of possibilities

The results were most dramatic after the migration from CA-Datcom to DB2. CA-Datcom was not consistently based on open standards, so modern business intelligence query tools could not easily work with the company’s CA-Datcom-based Genesys database, which manages new business, underwriting, accounting and financial reporting information.

CA-Datcom had not only been difficult to work with, it also presented a tall migration challenge. CA-Datcom was comprised of two levels of code, SQL and a proprietary application code named Native Call. Generali USA would have had to reprogram the entire CA-Datcom installation from top to bottom unless it could find a robust migration tool.

“With the lower cost of Linux, we have fulfilled our vision of a manageable integrated information environment that is cost-effective. It will also support our business growth well into the future.”

– Mike Amos, Director of Application Development, Generali USA

Fortunately, Generali USA encountered IBM Business Partner Independent Systems Integrators (ISI). Based in Sydney, Australia, ISI offered a CA-Datcom-to-DB2 migration tool called 2BDB2. In particular, the 2BDB2 Transparency Tool promised to drastically cut down the work involved in the planned migration. Generali USA chose it over competing tools from ObjectStar and BITbyBIT because of the capabilities and size of ISI's customer base and the depth of its experience.

The 2BDB2 Transparency Tool works with existing Native Call applications, intercepting database calls as they execute and converting them to DB2 SQL. The same tool converts the results to the format that Native Call expects, enabling all of Generali USA's Native Call applications to function as before, except with DB2 instead of CA-Datcom.

DB2 performance exceeding expectations

With its new standardized information management platform, Generali USA has a much more efficient, productive database environment. Staff members can query databases at will using IBM DB2 Connect and Cognos Impromptu, a business intelligence tool which helps staff quickly compose business reports, trend analyses and other bottom-line enhancing content.

And even though the ISI 2BDB2 Transparency Tool imposes a layer of logic on top of DB2 SQL, the migration solution has not slowed down performance. "We're extremely happy with the performance of DB2 and 2BDB2/Transparency on the mainframe," says Hunt. "In fact, they have exceeded all of our expectations."

Now when Generali USA takes stock of its information management systems, they focus only on the IBM **@server** zSeries, with one prominent exception. Generali USA's actuarial data warehouse, which its actuaries use to develop Reinsurance rates and study mortality experience, runs on a system based on Intel processors and Red Hat Linux.

"For security reasons, we didn't want the actuarial data warehouse on the same platform as our other database implementations," says Mike Amos, director of application development at Generali USA. "With DB2 on Linux, we meet the security requirement and have the luxury of lowering the cost of the data warehouse operation and improving its availability. From what we learned about DB2 on Linux, we had a great deal of confidence that the result would be stable, highly reliable and fast, and it is. With the lower cost of Linux, we have fulfilled our vision of a manageable integrated information environment that is cost-effective. It will also support our business growth well into the future."

For more information

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For more information about Generali USA, visit: www.generaliusallifere.com



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