



Highlights

- Improved thin client performance; greater distribution flexibility
- Look and feel of end-user environment enhanced by ability to rapidly integrate advanced GUI capabilities
- Annual costs significantly reduced through user-friendly licensing model
- Efficient resource utilization achieved through true multi-threaded performance abilities
- No disruption to current COBOL programming practices

Softwrx Finds Ideal COBOL Solution isCOBOL™ APS selected for Java platform portability and universal thin client performance

“I’m quite impressed with Veryant. Product performance is excellent, and support has been outstanding. This has been a very good long-term decision for us.”

- John Jackson, President, Softwrx

Softwrx offers a comprehensive suite of enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions based on the proven COBOL programming language. When Softwrx needed higher performance, an improved graphical user interface (GUI), greater flexibility, and enhanced support, the company decided to change from the Micro Focus™-acquired ACUCOBOL-GT® solution to isCOBOL™ technology from Veryant, and found a long-term solution for its innovative software portfolio.

Integrated software solutions meet a range of business needs

Softwrx provides integrated software solutions tailored for a wide variety of business needs: accounting and financial management, business analysis, inventory management, and customer relationship management (CRM). Softwrx solutions are designed to provide organizations with increased analysis and control capabilities and the company serves many industries including manufacturing, distribution, retail/POS, construction, and healthcare.

The Nashville-based company had its early origins at Teksid Aluminum, a Fiat Group company, where Softwrx founder John Jackson developed several COBOL-based applications for business management. As an entrepreneur, Jackson knew that thousands of companies that had relied for years on mainframe systems would appreciate the benefits of new technologies and improved business systems delivered on more cost-effective platforms. The market was receptive to the idea of sophisticated, advanced business software applications built on a recognized, established platform so Softwrx began offering its business management applications on open systems using ACUCOBOL-GT, one of the early development systems for extending COBOL applications.

COBOL acquisition creates challenges

Softwrx initially developed and deployed its solutions on ACUCOBOL-GT. That approach worked for a time. However, difficulties with performance, file structure, graphical controls, flexibility, and long-term portability created challenges for Softwrx in supporting its customer base. In addition, when Micro Focus acquired the ACUCOBOL-GT solution, customer support changed considerably. Direct access to knowledgeable technicians became available only through a lengthy phone process, which significantly delayed answers, making it even more difficult for Softwrx to support its customers.

“We were experiencing a high level of frustration with support delivery, product weaknesses, and high costs,” Jackson declared. “We decided to look for an alternative COBOL solution. We knew we wanted a product that was more functional, stable, and direct than ACUCOBOL-GT, with good documentation and a high level of support.”

A complete, cost-effective COBOL alternative

After researching the market and evaluating options, Jackson found Veryant, whose isCOBOL™ Application Platform Suite (APS) appeared to be an excellent alternative to ACUCOBOL-GT. Jackson decided that Veryant offered the best technology, excellent ease-of-use, and the fastest time to market. In addition, it was the most cost-effective option. He knew that ACUCOBOL-GT was not the best long-term solution for his company and considered RM/COBOL® too difficult to implement and deploy. Since RM/COBOL had recently been purchased by Micro Focus, the future of its support and pricing was uncertain as well.

So, even though Softwrx had already paid for the next year of support from Micro Focus, the company decided to move to isCOBOL APS from Veryant. Softwrx chose several components of isCOBOL APS: the isCOBOL™ Compiler, isCOBOL™ Runtime Environment, isCOBOL™ Debugger, isCOBOL™ Server (thin client and distributed processing), and isCOBOL™ ISAM Server, creating a complete environment for application development and deployment.

Softwrx switches to Veryant in one week

Because of the ease-of-use of isCOBOL APS and excellent customer support, Softwrx was able to move from ACUCOBOL-GT to isCOBOL APS in just one week. Customer applications were on track to move within 90 days.

Softwrx's applications have nearly 800 COBOL programs and their primary deployment platform is Red Hat® Linux on mid-range servers. The company selected isCOBOL ISAM Server for data access. Vision files were used with ACUCOBOL-GT, but Jackson experienced better stability with isCOBOL ISAM Server. Softwrx offers a thin client deployment model for its offerings. Users access COBOL applications directly on their desktops or distributed across a network through VPN.

Because Veryant's isCOBOL Compiler translates COBOL source code into Java classes that are then executed with the Java Virtual Machine (JVM), Jackson's development team continued programming in COBOL and there was no disruption caused by this move. The isCOBOL APS 100% Java-based compiler provides extreme flexibility and eliminated the need to purchase and use a different compiler for different operating systems. This provides Softwrx with long-term portability, regardless of future operating system decisions.

"Developers typically throw tons of items on a single screen, forgetting that employees can be overwhelmed with too much information and become less productive," noted Jackson. "We want to give them just what they need so they can do their job easily. The flexibility of graphical controls is much more advanced in a Java environment, and the controls work without a lot of modification to code or other changes."

Jackson believes the Java capabilities and Web enablement options in isCOBOL APS will be important to guarantee flexibility for future application development and to meet evolving customer requirements. One Softwrx customer has more than 500 locations worldwide; another has a very large operation for account payables and purchase orders. Both companies provide access to Softwrx applications through Web browsers.

isCOBOL APS meets all success criteria

Softwrx found isCOBOL APS to be more streamlined and efficient than its previous COBOL platform. Some of the isCOBOL features most appreciated by Softwrx include modern Grid control features, built-in platform independent PDF and print preview functions, as well as universal thin client with one click deployment using Java Web Start.

- » Leveraging Grid Controls and GUI advances in isCOBOL APS such as automatic sorting enables Softwrx to easily graph sales histories and gross profit margins for customers evaluating past performance; a task that took much more coding with ACUCOBOL-GT.
- » Simplified print preview functionality reduces Softwrx's overhead to implement this capability down to a single button; with other platforms, it was necessary to call Windows DDI to implement print preview.
- » Improved hardware resource utilization gained through true multi-threading with isCOBOL APS further reduces Softwrx's TCO; other COBOL options that move COBOL to a GUI environment only emulate multi-threading.

Most importantly, isCOBOL APS met the criteria that Softwrx sought: better performance, greater flexibility, and enhanced future portability options.



Veryant, 2415 East Camelback Road, Suite 700; Phoenix, AZ 85016

© 2008 Veryant. All rights reserved. isCOBOL is a trademark, or registered trademark of Veryant in the United States and other countries. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.