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A CASE STUDY OF PLATFORM MIGRATION - UNISYS MAINFRAME TO UNIX

DAVID J. JOSEPH COMPANY, CINCINNATI, OHIO : Projects by Inglenet Business Solutions, 1994 - 1996

Summary

The David J. Joseph Company (DJJ) is a privately-held metal recycling company in Cincinnati. They have over 1,000 employees and annual revenues in excess of \$ 1 Billion. DJJ made a decision to migrate from their Unisys 2200 to a Unix server in 1994. The project was successfully completed in 22 months and DJJ went live in production in 1996. The initial project was an “as is” COBOL-to-COBOL replatforming initiative using Inglenet TIP/ix to support TIP COBOL on Unix. Afterward, DJJ undertook to begin redeveloping the COBOL programs to create native Oracle applications. A great deal of this has been completed, although TIP/ix is still in use supporting replatformed COBOL.

Motivators

The initial DJJ motivation to move off of the Unisys 2200 was financial. “We were certain we could significantly lower costs – both hardware maintenance and software licensing”. DJJ was spending over \$ 40K per month in total Unisys 2200 operating costs. In addition, there were no Commercial-off-the-Shelf (COTS) applications for the 2200, so any new functionality that one would expect to be able to obtain in a package had to be written by DJJ. “We were looking for COTS solutions for FAXing, GL, HR and Payroll. It didn’t make sense to write that for ourselves”. Even to write new applications was difficult because there were no “tools” for the 2200.

Options/Alternatives Considered

Initially, DJJ investigated rewriting everything as new Unix-based components. Rewrite cost projections for their core applications were \$ 3-5 Million, with an estimated time frame of 5-7 years (15-20 person years).

When given further consideration, DJJ determined that their core applications were mature (stable) and worked well for the business. Further, it was estimated that a rewrite project would net no more than 10% new functionality over what was already in place. A \$3-\$5 Million project requiring 15-20 person years, that would yield only 10% new functionality, was not deemed a good investment.

The decision was therefore made to quickly move from the 2200 to Unix, enjoy the cost savings (\$ 40K/month), and gradually rewrite (and improve) the COBOL to be native Oracle applications, when and where necessary. DJJ viewed this approach as one that would make them better off and in no way could make them worse off. The project was viewed as a lateral or “sideways” move, but in doing so, made it possible to subsequently move forward because they would be on new technology.

Results

DJJ moved in 22 months, completing the project on time and on budget. The replatforming project cost was \$1.2 Million. There were no hidden costs or overruns. Costs savings of nearly \$.5 Million/year have been realized in each of the last seven years, providing a source of funding for the Oracle rewrite initiative. Some applications are now Oracle-based, while others have remained TIP COBOL running on TIP/ix.

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