

Information



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City of Santa Clara Goes GCOS to NT at the Touch of a Switch

There has been a lot of media coverage over the last few months concerning the de-regulation of the utility providers in the State of California. Much of this is due to the large number of new utility providers that have popped up overnight to compete in this highly lucrative market. These include several environment conscious "green" organizations and even a Christian-based Church that has apparently "seen the light" in entering into this venture. (Rumors that the Church based energy company's motto will be "Let there be Light!" have not been confirmed!).

For the incumbent utility companies, it has been a time of streamlining and improving efficiency in preparation for the new onslaught of competition. One such incumbent, the City of Santa Clara, has provided public utilities in the Santa Clara area for many decades. Up until this year, their utility billing systems (also many decades old) resided on a Bull DPS 7000. Access to the GCOS 7 based data was limited and the City needed to perform extensive decision support analysis on this data.

The operation is facility managed by Business Records Corporation (BRC), which had brought in many additional open and commodity based solutions for other City functions. The utility billing also needed to be more accessible to these systems.

In the middle of 1997, a decision was made to migrate all of the City's GCOS 7 based applications to a client/server Windows NT environment, make them Year 2000 compliant and develop a Data Mart for decision support that would use the utility billing data.

Making the Switch

With the help of InfoSol and the GDT-TS7 Migration tool set, the transition from GCOS 7 to Windows NT was accomplished in months. After extensive parallel testing, the applications were put into production under Windows NT at the end of February 1998. The NT server used is a Data General quad-Pentium processor with Windows 95 clients. The daily production batch run which used to take about 3 hours on the DPS 7000 now runs in 30 minutes on the NT server.

The Year 2000 Impact Analysis and Code Renovation was performed in parallel with the migration. Data aging programs were also developed for testing, which is scheduled to occur in the new NT environment in the next few months.

Conversion Utility Developed

InfoSol also developed a special file conversion utility to convert MicroFocus COBOL files into comma delimited text files for loading into the Data Mart and other commodity databases or spreadsheets. The utility, called I-CLOD (InfoSol – COBOL Load to Open Database), is written in Visual Basic and uses the GDT Dynamic COBOL OCX to accommodate different COBOL file descriptions for the same file.

The City of Santa Clara is very pleased with its new environment and is ready to take on all of the new competition, be it green or divine!

KEY SPECIFICS

- Client only expected to run in new GDT environment for 18 months until new turnkey solution would replace billing application. They ended up running for over 3 years, and finally disconnected in the Summer of 2001.
- Batch jobs ran 5 to 6 times faster in new environment.
- Migration took 9 to 10 months. Some delay due to lack of client staff to test migrated applications.
- I-CLOD using GDT Dynamic COBOL OCX for loading MicroFocus files to RDBMS Data Mart originally developed for this client.