The new face of COBOL®

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Sport Chalet Rises to the Top with Acucorp Technologies

"Acucorp is always coming out with new tools and direction, like thin client and .NET. Those are the types of things we need. It's nice to know we can get them with Acucorp technologies."
—Jim Witkowski, Program Manager, Sport Chalet

Sport Chalet Fast Facts:

- Sporting goods retail
- Headquartered in La Cañada, California
- 45 years in business
- 32 store locations
- 3,000 employees
- 2003-2004 revenues: $264 million
- www.sportchalet.com

Application:

- Enterprise Resource Planning: Inventory control, pricing, maintenance, sales reporting, financials, vendor reporting

Business Needs:

- Platform conversion
- Data access
- Faster processing

New Environments:

- ACUCOBOL-GT®
- Sun SPARC, Solaris server
- Vision file system

Previous Environment:

- Wang COBOL
- Wang OS
- Wang file system

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Business Issue

Sport Chalet is a leading retailer of sporting goods equipment in Southern California and Nevada. Starting with just one store in 1959, the company expanded to 32 store locations over the next four decades.

In the mid-1990s, Sport Chalet had a business-critical enterprise resource planning (ERP) application running on a Wang system, but the Wang was unable to keep pace with the company's growth, and support for the Wang was waning. Sport Chalet needed a platform that could support the application and provide opportunities for more growth and modernization.

Solution

Sport Chalet chose to convert its application to ACUCOBOL-GT and migrate it to a Sun Solaris E3000. The migration was performed by Unicon Conversion Technologies.

Recently, Sport Chalet considered replacing the legacy ERP software with a new system, but realized that its application provided a breadth of functions that couldn't be matched by off-the-shelf packages.

Executives decided instead to adopt a relational database and upgrade to a larger Sun E4500 processor. Only select specialty functions (such as replenishment and warehouse management) would be replaced with best-of-breed software packages. The rest would remain in ACUCOBOL-GT because of its potential for future development.

However, tests showed that Acucorp's Vision indexed file system was ten times faster than the relational database, so the move to the RDBMS was halted, saving the company $28,000 in annual maintenance charges.

Benefits

Sport Chalet has experienced a number of benefits since moving to Sun and ACUCOBOL-GT. Development is much faster—compiling alone took up to seven minutes on the Wang and now takes just a few seconds. Debugging is faster, too.

In addition, Acucorp's tools allow developers to enrich the functionality of their current application and respond more easily to user requests. For instance, the ERP system can now send email to employees' phones when problems are encountered. Solutions like this help drive the company.

End users, too, are more productive with their new tools. They are able to access corporate data stored in the Vision file system from applications like Monarch, Excel, and Crystal Reports. This helps them make decisions that improve revenue. An entire year's data can be stored on the server and queried.

And best of all, by extending the life of its legacy system, Sport Chalet was able to defer the expense of a new enterprise application.

Future Plans

Sport Chalet plans to supply users with a graphical user interface soon. It is now evaluating Acucorp's thin client technology, which will allow a GUI to be displayed on PCs from UNIX. Sport Chalet is experimenting with the AcuBench® Screen Designer as well, because developing a GUI in COBOL allows its staff to be immediately productive. With Acucorp on its side, Sport Chalet expects to meet its IT goals for years to come.