



ROBERT BORST, ICT MANAGER FOR BRABANTIA IN WAALRE:
‘THANKS TO LION, OUR APPLICATIONS ARE JUST AS STABLE UNDER WINDOWS AS ON A MAINFRAME’

With the aid of Asysco’s AMT-LION migration technology, Brabantia has migrated four large mainframe applications to the Windows platform. The next step is server virtualisation, in which AMT-LION will again play a major role. ‘Our business applications run just as stable under Windows as they used to do on the mainframe. But we’re now much more flexible in linking to external applications. Moreover, thanks to AMT-LION, we can easily provide our legacy applications with a web interface.’

Brabantia is an international brand of innovative, durable and timeless household products and, therefore, operates worldwide. IT is organised centrally in the Netherlands. ‘Our last Unisys mainframe was the A14 Clearpath,’ says ICT Manager Robert Borst. ‘But we already used Asysco technology when we still had a mainframe.’

The relationship between Brabantia and Asysco dates back to the time when the software company from Coevorden focused mainly on LDA tools like Aligner, RTQuery and MDLFind. ‘Of course, one of the biggest problems in working with a mainframe is the cost. It’s not just the hardware that’s expensive – the tools that we used to use to develop tailor-made applications also cost a lot of money. It looked as though Asysco had developed an interesting tool within LION for Unisys users who wanted to reduce these development costs.’

The tool generates from the EAE (LDA) ‘model file’ Delphi code. A mainframe is no longer involved. In fact, the Delphi code is generated on the Windows platform and can then be implemented on a Windows server. In addition to this, Asysco has also developed a tool that enables LION applications to be developed that combine the benefits of the mainframe and Windows. In other words, they are robust with very high availability but are also inexpensive and flexible. A major difference between both tools is that the latter no longer uses the ‘model file’ derived from the mainframe. Moreover, both tools make it possible to provide an application with a web interface. This allows mobile workers, partners or suppliers remote access to the applications.

The link between Asysco and Brabantia was created when Unisys made its smaller customers aware of the possibilities afforded by Asysco tools. When Brabantia’s account manager Mark Schuurkens moved to Asysco, Brabantia compared the service provided by Unisys with that of Asysco. ‘Indeed, we took a good look at Asysco,’ says Borst. ‘The company has been around for thirty years and has a great deal of knowledge of this market segment. It has fully proven itself in this market. When you added to that the benefits offered by AMT-LION and the fact that Unisys’s attention focused on its larger customers, the decision was quickly made.’



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In 2005, Robert Borst decided to start the migration. 'We did this in different stages. We used LION to migrate from the mainframe to Windows. This gave us maximum control and the biggest chance of a successful migration. It also enabled us to return to the mainframe if it went wrong. For the migration we used the services of Asysco and their migration script. This script converted the existing applications and the business logic incorporated in them to AMT-LION code. After running the script, it took us about a month to get everything working well. Functionally, the new applications are the same as the old mainframe applications but, thanks to AMT-LION, they can now be used in a Windows environment. Because we've installed a cluster of Windows systems, the entire system environment is just as reliable as the mainframe used to be.'

'ASYSCO HAS DEVELOPED AN INTERESTING PRODUCT FOR UNISYS USERS THAT WANT LOWER DEVELOPMENT COSTS'

However, working with Windows can lead to problems with drivers, for example. For this reason, Borst has decided to migrate the clustered LION environment to unclustered servers on a VMware ESX environment, which provides virtual servers that run directly on the Intel platform. This means that Windows will soon be running only on isolated virtual servers and problems with conflicting drivers, for example, will be a thing of the past. The complexity of the clustering will also disappear while availability will continue to be guaranteed.



'The benefits of Brabantia's migration to AMT-LION are great,' says Borst. 'First of all, we no longer have to deal with the high cost of the mainframe hardware. We've been able to achieve an estimated saving of eighty percent on that point alone. We've also been able to drastically simplify the back-up procedure, which has reduced costs considerably. Because we now have fewer different environments, management costs have also dropped.' However, according to Borst, it's not just about money. 'We also have a much more flexible ICT environment. For example, real-time communication between applications is now possible, while the mainframe enabled batch communications only. Moreover, thanks to AMT-LION, we can have web interfaces for all our important business systems that can be accessed by mobile employees or external parties. When you also consider that the availability of these information systems is comparable with our old mainframe environment, you can clearly see that we are a satisfied user of Asysco's LION technology.'

CUSTOMER

Brabantia, a brand of innovative, durable and timeless household products.

PROBLEM

High cost of application development (LINC) on the Unisys mainframe combined with high expenditure on mainframe hardware.

SOLUTION

Phased migration to AMT-LION as a LINC development environment and finally as a platform enabling the use of mainframe applications on the Windows platform without losing the robustness and availability of these applications.

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