

Open Windows platform for Unisys mainframe simply accessible

Business agility, which allows new products to be effectively marketed, must receive optimum support from IT. That is tricky for mainframe users. Software development is time consuming and inefficient. The switch to an open Windows platform is the solution, which is quickly realizable thanks to Asysco.

B Within a few months, the Asysco staff can migrate the applications and the information system of a Unisys mainframe, automatically and faultlessly. The organization in question can then happily continue with the same functionality as before but with much greater effectiveness. By now, the proposition has proven its value at dozens of large and globally operating organizations. "Our migration projects take four to twelve months, most of which is spent on the project as such: qualification of all the components. The migration itself only takes a number of man days", explains Romke Wijmenga, CTO of Asysco. "Because of that and our growing expertise, we're noticing that the more conservative organizations, such as those in the financial world, are also finding their way to us", adds CEO Erik van Rikxoort. Asysco, an IT organization founded in Coevorden in 1979, has grown to become an international market leader in the field of Unisys mainframe conversions in recent years, thanks to its autonomously developed LION migration technology. With a total of 75 staff and branches in the Netherlands, UK, Spain and the US, the organization can serve clients worldwide.

Convinced Migration projects entail a lengthy initial road before a final decision is taken. Organizations do not simply leave behind their tried and trusted mainframe. Van Rikxoort: "Our reference list is very important in such decisions and by now is so extensive that it speaks for itself." Organizations on the Asysco reference list are also willing to talk to potential clients about their own experience with automatic migration. Liberty travel, for instance, the largest on-line travel organization of the United States; Mashreq, the largest private bank in Dubai; HBOS, the largest mortgage and savings bank in the UK, Brabantia; the Brookman group the Lage Landen. Moreover, Asysco always provides a 'proof of concept' of a defined sub-area or a modestly sized pilot using the client's information system. "Once the potential client has seen all the options, they're convinced. A relational database which is accessible for so much tooling renders an open Windows platform very attractive. Regardless of the cost aspect, which is thirty to forty percent of the redevelopment costs, benefits can also be gained from the openness and straight through processing", says Wijmenga.

Blueprint "There are four options for migration of a mainframe. The first is to switch to an ERP package, whereby an organization must abide by strict rules. The second is a 'rewrite', starting from scratch, which is an expensive and lengthy procedure. A third option is the 'lift and shift': pick up the existent programming code and convert it to a Unix or Windows world, then use the platform-specific compilers. That usually entails twenty percent manual work. What's left is the Asysco automatic migration solution", Wijmenga explains the Asysco success. A major advantage of the automatic migration is the almost complete elimination of the human factor, which generally gives the greatest risk of errors. Automatic migration is less risky, is quicker and more controllable. Wijmenga: "If we discover a problem after all, we solve it generically in the converter and then reconvert it all again instead of taking manual action." The Asysco approach is not limited simply to the technology aspects. The IT organization and the users must also take the necessary steps, as success is determined by the organization as a whole. The 'site survey' conducted by Asysco prior to migration, eventually



Romke Wijmenga

"The pilot lays the basis for automatic conversions in the IBM mainframe world"

provides a blueprint of the project, including the time path, the necessary resources and the budget. "We want to know how the IT organization works, which skills are present, where training is required and which test approach is best. We also talk to representatives of various departments in an organization in order to gear our approach optimally", says Wijmenga, who's always personally involved in projects.

Basis Asysco is ready for the next step by now: to become market leader for the automatic conversion of IBM mainframes. The necessary technology has been rounded off and the first pilot will be launched late in 2008. Van Rikxoort: "The IBM mainframe market is different to the Unisys market of course, and so too is our proposition therefore.

There can easily be 150 software licenses on IBM mainframes. We are therefore more likely to replace parts of information systems or entire information systems rather than the complete mainframe. That's a different approach. Asysco offers IBM mainframe users effectiveness by reducing the MIPS consumption, for example. That also entails a considerable cost reduction, though there are certainly also other benefits. Wijmenga: "An organization can develop, test and roll out new IT products more quickly with an information system which works on a Windows or Linux platform. That has been sufficiently proven already". Despite the great reference value of the Unisys conversions, Asysco wishes to start up the IBM mainframe market with caution. "We'll start with this pilot in order to prove ourselves. That will be a healthy basis for the IBM Mainframe world", van Rikxoort concludes.

