



**JIM MAY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT,
NATURE'S SUNSHINE PRODUCTS, PROVO (UTAH)**

ASYSKO MAKES NATURE'S SUNSHINE FLEXIBLE

"Now that we have an open, standard system, we can support our customers better," says Jim May, Executive Director of Corporate Development at Nature's Sunshine Products, a manufacturer of herbal, vitamin, mineral and nutritional supplements. Asysco has helped to migrate the closed Unisys mainframe platform to a flexible, web-based system. Contact with customers was not disrupted at any point during the migration. "That was a hard requirement because our customers depend on our operating system for their income. We didn't want to sell anybody short."

Nature's Sunshine Products (NSP) was founded in the nineteen-seventies around the kitchen table of Gene Hughes, a teacher in Provo. He was taking cayenne pepper to cure stomach complaints. His wife suggested putting the spice in a gelatin capsule to make taking it easier and this was the start of a company that today trades food supplements and skin-care products in 33 countries, with a constantly increasing turnover.

AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF DISTRIBUTORS

NSP works with a so-called multilevel marketing system. The products are purchased by independent distributors who sell them on to customers or to their associated distributors. Over the years, this has created a network

of approximately 600,000 sellers, who are often one-person companies. Depending on their sales, the distributors receive a discount on NSP products. They also get a bonus on the sales made by their own distributors.

The advantage of the system that Nature's Sunshine employs is that a complex network of sales points can be built up pretty quickly. Moreover, there is always direct contact between the seller and the buyer of the product, who can get free advice about how to use the food supplements and care products. Naturally this approach does require thorough and comprehensive administration. You not only have to know who is buying which product but also the mutual relationships between distributors in order to calculate their bonuses.

For many years, NSP worked with a Unisys mainframe and the appropriate application. Internal personnel still work with text-based screens but now that the migration to an open system has been completed, these text-based screens can be modernized to graphical screens quickly and easily.

The application could already be accessed from the Internet while on the mainframe, but it was very complicated – and expensive – to make the links between the application and Internet work. "Our distributors could already place their



Asysco Inc.

3301 Thomasville Road / Tallahassee FL 32308 USA
Phone (850) 383-2522 / www.asyscousa.com

orders and monitor their status via the Internet or the call center. They could also place and monitor orders placed by distributors in their line. However, what we wanted to do was make that communication easier and more seamless," says May. Probably even more important is that NSP wanted to use the Internet to provide material to help its distributors to be successful. Things like product information, sales materials, and training films. "We simply hit the limits of the mainframe. It couldn't cope with that."

WASTED TIME

May explained his wishes to Unisys who said that their Agile Business Suite would answer NSP's problems. AB Suite is the latest of Unisys's 4GL development environments – a platform that closely resembles Microsoft's Visual Studio. "With this we would be able to open the Unisys database to the modern world and gradually migrate to an open system using the various web standards. It all looked very promising," says May. But the opposite proved to be the case. They spent months trying to get the AB Suite to fulfill its promises. "But it just didn't work. It was a waste of time and energy," says May bitterly.

'We just had to switch to a fully open system.'

In 2007, May came across Asysco's solution for migrating from a closed mainframe system to an open Wintel platform. "Our most important requirement was that, following the migration of data, the system should operate just as well as it had always done on the mainframe for so many years. We wanted to be sure that our distributors got what they were entitled to. Because, in the final analysis, their income depends on our administration," says May. "Asysco customers seemed to have had positive experiences and we had also enjoyed a pleasant, honest relationship with Asysco employees. So we took a chance with them."

COMPLETE MIGRATION

The project started with the 'discovery' phase. This period reveals the full breadth and scope of the project. This led to a proposal that grew into a project plan through mutual consultation.

NSP purchased various Intel servers and licenses for Microsoft SQL Server as a database platform. By building in redundancy, it was possible to make the platform error-proof. Full migration of the business-critical systems from mainframe to AMT (Asysco's Migration Technology) LION, its open platform, could begin. The migration was completed successfully in seven months.

"It took a month longer than we expected but that was because SQL Servers handle mainframe routines differently. We only discovered that later. You can't judge that sort of thing in advance. Partly due to the commitment of Asysco's employees, we were able to resolve this bottleneck quickly and satisfactorily." Now that Nature's Sunshine has a stable, open system, May is already thinking ahead. "Now the way is open to a services oriented architecture."

SAVINGS

Money was not the primary reason for undertaking this risky operation, says May. "We saw that the mainframe platform made it impossible for us to serve our customers in the way we wanted. This made IT a hindrance to growing the business. We just had to switch to a fully open system."

AMT-LION has certainly benefitted Nature's Sunshine. "In the first three years we'll save 150,000 dollars by using Asysco's solution instead of the mainframe. After those three years, the savings will rise rapidly because then we would have needed new licenses for the mainframe. But, like I said, these savings are just a nice side-effect."

CUSTOMER

Nature's Sunshine Products

SECTOR

Retail

PROBLEM

The closed mainframe platform prevented NSP from supplying its distributors with ways of optimizing their business.

SOLUTION

100% of the mainframe application was transferred to AMT (Asysco's Migration Technology) LION. The entire operation resulted in no impediment to Nature's Sunshine and thanks to this project they have been able to expand their business. A nice side-effect is that the solution has provided savings of 150,000 dollars in the first three years – an amount that will rise sharply in the years to come.

LION® is a registered trademark of Asysco Software. A-series®, 2200®, LINC/EAE®, DMS®, RDMS® is a registered trademark of Unisys Corporation / MS Windows®, MS SQL Server®, .NET® is a trademark of Microsoft Corporation. / DB2® is a trademark of IBM Corporation / Oracle® is a trademark of Oracle Corporation