



**ROB FEENSTRA, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, ICT AND FACILITIES
AT DE FRIESLAND ZORGVERZEKERAR:**

‘THE INVESTMENT IN MIGRATION WAS EARNED BACK IN SIX MONTHS’

Ikaz is a crucial application for De Friesland Zorgverzekeraar. Developed with LINC, this business information system was built by the company’s own ICT department and ran for years on a Unisys mainframe. However, this platform was so expensive that the insurance company decided to look for alternatives. Asysco’s (AMT) LION Migration Technology came to their notice. The migration of Ikaz was not only almost entirely automatic but it was also possible to earn back the investment in only a few months.

It does not happen often that a Unisys user has been a customer of both Sperry and Burroughs. In this respect, De Friesland Zorgverzekeraar is the exception that proves the rule. The company bought a Sperry 1100 in the nineteen-eighties and then switched to a Burroughs A series in the nineteen-nineties. “The most important application that we ran on the mainframe was Ikaz,” says Rob Feenstra, Director of Finance, ICT and Facilities at De Friesland Zorgverzekeraar. “The entire administration for insurance customers is based on this system. Ikaz was built with LINC, a fourth-generation Unisys language.”

ADVANTAGES OF .NET

At the beginning of 2001, the A11 that the insurance company was using as a production system came to the end of its technical and economic life. “So that was also the time for us to investigate how we wanted to proceed with

our ICT approach,” says Feenstra. “We looked at reinvesting in a mainframe and we also investigated Microsoft’s .NET platform. The latter appealed to us because it would enable us to bid farewell to the rigid mainframe world and become much more flexible.”

However, the benefits of the Microsoft technology did not weigh up against the cost and risks involved in rebuilding Ikaz on the Windows platform. “We didn’t dare to take the risk. We also looked at the possibilities of using LINC on Windows NT. Unisys had announced this development a couple of years before but no finished product had yet appeared on the market that would enable us to build LINC applications on Windows.”

AMT-LION AS ALTERNATIVE

It was during their search for various alternatives that Feenstra came across the name Asysco. We didn’t know Asysco’s (AMT) LION Migration Technology but, to be honest, we were immediately interested. At the same time, we had quite a few questions. Our technical people were particularly surprised that the migration of a large, complex LINC application could be done almost fully automatically.”

In spite of these doubts, Feenstra decided to have a ‘proof of concept’ carried out. “For that, we chose a financial system. That probably sounds like a large, complex environment but in this case it represented a fairly



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modest start. The concept seemed to be problem-free. Apart from a few minor points, almost the entire program was migrated at one go and the transfer process was fully automatic."

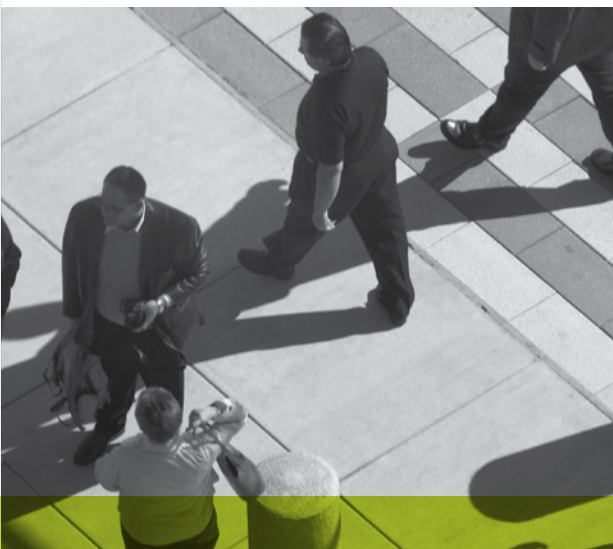
ESCROW FOR CONTINUITY

"Based on that experience, we made a strategic decision," continues Feenstra. "The mainframe was phased out and we switched to the Windows/AMT-LION combination. However, it was then that we ran into a problem: Ikaz is crucially important to us and, with about seventy employees, Asysco is a relatively small company, of course. What would this mean in terms of continuity? So we looked for a way of getting more security with regard to both Asysco and AMT-LION."

"WE EARNED BACK THE INVESTMENT IN THE ENTIRE MIGRATION PROGRAM VERY QUICKLY. IT TOOK LESS THAN SIX MONTHS IN FACT."

The solution was found in an escrow arrangement. This means that Asysco would give a copy of the most recent source code of AMT-LION to a notary firm specialized in this sort of operation. This notary can release the source code under certain circumstances. The entire escrow arrangement comes under the responsibility of the Stichting Softwareborg (Software Surety Foundation).

"Escrow is important but even more important to us is to build up a relationship of trust with a supplier – in this case, Asysco," says Feenstra. "From that point of view, it's very nice that Asysco's culture is so close to that of De Friesland Zorgverzekeraar: sober and with a preference for a no-nonsense approach."



THE RESULTS

Ikaz has now been running on AMT-LION on the Windows platform for some time. "Of course, we have had to purchase new hardware, with redundancy, and a number of employees have taken a training course. We also had to make a few adjustments with a view to security, but, in spite of this sort of cost, we earned back the investment in the entire migration program very quickly. It took less than six months in fact."

According to Feenstra, one of the big advantages of the new approach is the fact that application and data are now entirely separate. "In a mainframe environment, this all integrated. Now that data and application logic are separate, manageability has been drastically improved." The migration went in a way that Feenstra calls 'almost boring'. "The migration went entirely to plan. As far as reliability, speed and scalability are concerned, for example, the new environment completely satisfies our expectations and is in no way inferior to the old mainframe platform."

CLIENT

De Friesland Zorgverzekeraar

SECTOR

Insurance/healthcare

PROBLEM

Because the old mainframe system of De Friesland Zorgverzekeraar had reached the end of its technical and economic life-cycle, a new platform had to be found. But would this be another mainframe or perhaps Microsoft's .Net platform? The insurance company also considered the mainframe platform to be extremely expensive.

SOLUTION

Migration to the AMT-LION platform made it possible to transfer the business-critical applications of De Friesland Zorgverzekeraar to the Windows platform without necessitating risky and expensive rebuilding.

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