

USING LION BY UNISYS – MAINFRAME TO OPEN WINDOWS PLATFORM

Many organizations feel very challenged by the idea of migrating a Unisys mainframe to an open Windows platform. There’s no need, according to Erik van Rikxoort, CEO, and Romke Wijmenga, CTO of Asysco. Such a migration can be realized within a few months and the organization can continue with a clean slate.

The Asysco staff sometimes have a hard time explaining how migration of a Unisys mainframe to an open Windows platform via the Asysco method only takes a few months and that there are seldom problems. “We often have to give statements on the truth of the matter. Luckily, clients for whom we have already realized the migration process are always willing to serve as references”, says Wijmenga.

“During a recent round table discussion with forty European clients, an external guest was extremely surprised that there had been no complaints and that everyone was satisfied”, adds Van Rikxoort.

Asysco, an IT organization founded in Coevorden in 1979 and developer of the LION migration technology, has grown to become market leader in the field of Unisys mainframe conversions over the past ten years. With a total of seventy staff and branches in the Netherlands, UK, Spain and the United States, the organization is able to serve its customers worldwide.

ONE TO ONE

The list of customers for whom Asysco has carried out migrations is an impressive one, ranging from Liberty Travel, the largest on-line travel organization in the United States, Mashreq, the largest private bank in Dubai, and

HBOS, the largest mortgage and savings bank in the UK, to Galicia, the largest provincial authorities of Spain. A number of large Dutch organizations, such as Brabantia, Agrico cooperative, the Broekman Group and the Lage Landen,

have also found their way to Asysco.

This has all grown despite any real marketing investments having been made in the past. Anyone with a Unisys mainframe who hears about the Asysco approach, naturally becomes interested.

Wijmenga: “The Unisys mainframes comprise eighty percent COBOL applications and twenty percent LINC, a fourth generation language developed specifically for the Unisys platform. We migrate all those millions of lines of code within a number of months, via LION, an automated method developed by us, to an open Windows platform. We do so on a one to one basis, so you know exactly what you’re getting back. As soon as the process is complete, including successful testing, you can in fact continue to expand and build on the system as before.”

Van Rikxoort: “We demonstrate our working method not by means of PowerPoint, but rather by requesting code from the organization, converting it and then going back with the new version. Thanks to our many years of experience, we can of course

do much more than simply converting code. However, we know that for a mainframe user, the most important factor is the successful migration and that we need to offer guarantees for that purpose.”

PROUD OF THE BUGS

Migration is the first step therefore, and the big question for mainframe users afterwards is whether everything actually works. It is because of that uncertainty that many mainframe owners have begun re-writing and developing extra capacity in recent years. The great risk is then that the entire process takes years instead of months and that the business starts to lag behind. That’s different at Asysco. “You receive the same functionality back which you already had and it’s immediately operational, it’s that simple”, says Van Rikxoort. The organization makes no secret of the number of bugs which they encounter following a migration process.

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Romke Wijmenga

On the contrary, we're proud of the very low percentage. In every one million converted LINC lines, our staff find an average of forty issues, and in one million lines of COBOL code, there are between ninety and one hundred bugs. "Depending on the size of the mainframe, we're talking about three quarters of a million to ten million lines of code which we migrate, so you can imagine how many that are. All in all, it takes up a few man days upon conclusion of the process", says Wijmenga. When comparing this statement with a process of redevelopment, those ninety issues in every one million lines of code are a very reassuring thought. Moreover, the migration via Asysco is comparable with thirty to forty percent of the costs incurred by an organization for redevelopment.

GAINING BENEFITS

Although there are many reasons for migration from a closed supplier dependent Unisys platform to an open Windows platform, Asysco knows that this opens up a whole new world for these organizations, due to the increased flexibility. "A relational database accessible for so much tooling renders an open Windows platform very attractive. You gain benefits not only in the cost aspect but also in the openness and straight-through processing", explains Wijmenga.

Asysco is pleased to continue helping the client after implementation. Where necessary, the Asysco can work together with the client to discover the maximum bandwidth of a system. "We're not a body shop and we don't host either. We simply

provide all the services required to get our clients moving. We prefer partnerships, rather than dependency", says Van Rikxoort. ■

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