



**MARCEL DEN OUTER, PROJECT LEADER FOR IFN FINANCE
IN ROTTERDAM:**

‘THE MIGRATION OF THE UNISYS MAINFRAME TO LION WAS PROBLEM-FREE’

At the beginning of 2003, after having worked with Burroughs mainframes for fifteen years, IFN Finance migrated to Asysco’s Migration Technology (AMT) LION on the Windows platform. Marcel den Outer, project leader for IFN Finance, says that the migration ran entirely to plan. “To our amazement, Asysco’s prediction proved to be correct: almost the entire migration could be carried out automatically.” This enables IFN Finance to achieve an interesting objective: maintaining an application that was crucial to its business operations while drastically reducing IT costs at the same time.

IFN Finance is a subsidiary of ABN Amro. The company, which is based in Rotterdam, is active in financial services and, within that segment, focuses primarily on financing working capital. This includes such aspects as debt financing and stocks financing.

“These activities rely heavily on information systems that we have developed ourselves,” says Marcel den Outer, project leader in IFN Finance’s IT department. “We wrote this so-called ‘Basis Factoring System’ (BFS) at the beginning of the nineteen-nineties with the aid of Unisys’s LINC. BFS has always run on Unisys’s A-series mainframes. When we finally migrated to Asysco and AMT-LION in 2003, we had an A11 for production and a smaller A6 for development work and as a back-up.”

BFS is a crucial business application for IFN Finance. “It supports all major business processes in our organisation. We faced a number of problems at the same time. First of all, we thought that the mainframe and its associated infrastructure was too expensive. The licences and maintaining the mainframe are particularly expensive. Moreover, a mainframe is a closed system, which meant that we were too dependent on one supplier. We preferred to be able to work with a more open system environment, which would also make us more flexible.”

“We already knew Asysco and the AMT-LION platform, but not really well. Moreover, the IT department wanted to carefully examine how Asysco migrates applications like BFS to AMT-LION. In fact, Asysco claimed that this could be largely done automatically. At the IT department, we still had a few questions about this.”

Den Outer included the answers to these questions in the business case that IFN Finance decided to draw up. “We included all relevant factors in this, from the fact that Asysco is a pretty small company with approximately seventy employees to the question of what measures were needed with regard to the source code of the LION development environment. Actually, this latter point was solved satisfactorily by depositing this source code in escrow so that it would always be available to us and we could continue to maintain BFS with AMT-LION in the unlikely event of problems at Asysco.”



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“What also acted to Asysco’s advantage was the fact that there seemed to be plenty of customers that had migrated from Unisys mainframes to AMT-LION. These included companies in the Netherlands and other countries. There also appeared to be a formal international users’ association where customers and the company can exchange information and experiences. We also made an inventory of the investments and expected savings.”

The business case turned out to be very positive so it was decided to organise a proof of concept. The test went off without a problem. “We migrated BFS in a lab environment. To our amazement, no less than 98 or 99 percent of this migration was entirely automatic. The issues that occurred were simple to resolve by small modifications to the software.

TO OUR AMAZEMENT, ASYSCO’S PREDICTION PROVED TO BE CORRECT: ALMOST THE ENTIRE MIGRATION COULD BE CARRIED OUT AUTOMATICALLY”

A mainframe infrastructure may well be expensive but it is also easier to manage than an open Windows environment. A mainframe has also been developed to provide high availability. To create the same availability on a Windows platform, various other measures have to be taken. For example, IFN built in extra redundancy by using a double network, double disk controllers, a Raid5 disk system and a cluster server.”

IFN Finance formally migrated to AMT-LION in 2003. For hardware, they opted for an HP Compaq cluster that immediately enabled internal fail-over. The cluster also make load balancing possible so that the demand for processing capacity can be optimally divided over all available hardware.

The financial savings that IFN Finance hoped to achieve with the migration have been achieved without problems. Strategic objectives have also been realised. “Of course, using AMT-LION is not an objective for us. It’s a means to an end. IFN Finance has invested millions in the BFS application and this functionality is of vital importance

to us. By using AMT-LION, we can optimally protect our investments in BFS and we will be able to continue to use BFS for years in an IT environment that is many times more interesting from a costs point of view than a mainframe. Because we now work with open systems, we are also able to support changes in our business processes quickly and easily with IT.”

CUSTOMER	IFN Finance
SECTOR	Financial services
PROBLEM	A central application that is crucial to business operations also requires a much too expensive mainframe infrastructure.
SOLUTION	Migration to Asysco’s Migration Technology (AMT) LION. This allows existing business logic to be transferred largely automatically to a Windows-based system environment. In the way, existing investments in mainframe applications are optimally protected.

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