

# It's the business people and not the technical people that ask for Asysco

**Asysco, the company specialized in conversion software that makes the transition from Unisys mainframes to open systems run smoothly and seamlessly, is seeing exceptionally rapid growth. Located in rural Coevorden, the company is attracting the attention of firms the world over at an ever-increasing rate. "It's going incredibly fast," says CEO Erik van Rikxoort.**

to six months ago, we were mostly approached by companies that wanted to migrate their platforms for technical reasons. They wanted to get rid of their mainframes to save on costs and everything associated with them. This was mainly driven by IT in order to increase manageability. But what we've been seeing in recent months – and this is going very quickly – is that the process is becoming increasingly business driven. People have very big, monolithic applications that demand a great deal in terms of transparency and manageability. This makes it impossible to introduce changes quickly and keep time-to-market as short as possible. And this is happening at a time when, for example, the banking world wants to bring its business to the web – something that is virtually impossible with the old applications.”

## Jungle drums

“What they are realizing now is that, although the technology is important, of course, it is just as important to arrange the front-office and back-office software in comprehensible blocks,” continues Van Rikxoort. “This is worth a lot to them. Of course savings on maintenance play a role because they're migrating to a cheaper platform - they can achieve a saving of seventy percent on costs – but increasingly more companies are being attracted by the business side. What we are now seeing, thanks to these developments, is that we

are no longer being called by the CIO only but also by the CFO and the CEO. They are really starting to focus on this directly. For example, we recently went live with the Halifax Bank of Scotland. There we generated one of the

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biggest Microsoft applications in the world in only five months. We're talking about 19 million lines of code. We started work in February and went live on September 7th. To give you some idea: they use these applications to manage 50 billion pounds a year.” This sort of achievement simply makes the jungle drums beat louder. “We're being talked about in user groups and business meetings,” says Van Rikxoort. “Companies are coming to us. Because of this, we've doubled in size since the beginning of this year (this interview took place in the middle of September – Ed.)” However, the result of this is that Asysco is growing out of its shoes. Three to four new employees are joining the company every month and the building on the Gramsbergerstraat in Coevorden is already too small. This



Erik van Rikxoort

is why priority is now being given to finding new premises and the move must take place next year.

## No time to lose

“And all of this is because issues like time-to-market have become so very important,” says Van Rikxoort. “Companies – particularly those in the financial sector, of course – are under pressure to launch new products quickly and satisfy the wishes and demands of the market. And this leads them to come to us at an earlier stage. They have no time to lose. A company that hears that Telia Sonera and Nature's Sunshine have signed with us wants an appointment within two weeks. They spend a few days on reference visits and want

to start in January. And they do that even though we're going to cut the heart out of the company and replace it with a new one. We take out the mainframe – physically pull the plug. That's pretty drastic. And it's the pressure to implement quickly that drives them to make these quick decisions.”

“Of course we have a very sound track record. In such a case, they go to the Halifax Bank of Scotland where the management spends a day telling them what they should watch out for and where there might be problems, and then they begin.”

“For them, it's about how quickly they can get things to market. Another very hot topic is web enabling. These factors are often more important than the return on investment,

which is often under twelve months. In fact the ROI is usually between eight and twelve months. And that in itself is not even the trigger – it's become incidental. It's about the extra things that can be done, the standardization of the development staff – that sort of thing. It becomes much easier to develop something in .Net, for example. You can develop new products much faster.”

“It's a win-win situation,” concludes Van Rikxoort. “You usually see that the CEO is put under pressure to make savings while people on the business side want to develop things quickly. So it's a knife that cuts both ways. But we used to be invited to talk to the technical people only and that's becoming less and less.”