

NetFAX



MINISTRY OF FINANCE: REDUCED BUSINESS RISK THROUGH MODERNIZATION

Visual COBOL delivers a 50% application performance improvement



At a glance: Ministry of Finance

The Inland Revenue Department is responsible for the application and enforcement of direct tax legislation and the Double Tax Agreement concluded between Cyprus and other countries. It is consistent with government policy which aims to ensure sound public finances, combat tax evasion and provide apt quality service to taxpayers.

Solution

- Visual COBOL for Visual Studio
- COBOL Server

Challenge

Over 25 years ago, the Ministry of Finance, Inland Revenue Department (IRD), developed a system for managing its tax-related functions including a method of capturing the profile of each tax payer in Cyprus and a comprehensive process for tax collection. For years this application functioned well for its 600 civil servant users, but its hardware and software infrastructure had become unsupported, posing a huge business continuity risk to its operations. It was also difficult to enhance functionality due to technical limits, yet new business objectives and government regulations had to be met. The decision was made to update the system and various options were explored.

Re-write versus revamp

With over a century of business intelligence captured in the system, re-writing this application would be expensive, time consuming and risky - mission critical functionalities could be lost. Research, conducted by the Ministry of Finance, showed that no other packaged application in the market could cover the needs of its tax collection operations. The original system had been developed using Micro Focus Object COBOL Developer Suite (OCDS). The IRD had selected Microsoft .NET as its new platform. As its developers were comfortable using COBOL, it was important to retain their talent by building a bridge between COBOL and this new technology.

SYNTAX IT, Micro Focus' local partner, proposed a modernization approach using Visual COBOL for Visual Studio, which would enable the IRD to reuse all intellectual property with minimal changes, thus reducing its business risk. Its COBOL developers would be able to leverage their skills within Visual Studio, a modern development environment, with minimal training. A proof-of-concept showed the potential benefits and so Visual COBOL was chosen.



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

URL: www.mof.gov.cy
Industry: Government
Country: Republic of Cyprus
Partner: SYNTAX IT



Highlights

- Reduced business risk through use of a modern application platform
- Improvement of 50% in application performance
- Time to delivery accelerated by 30%
- New web based UI for its business users
- Improved application reliability and scalability
- Secure application access through integration with Microsoft's Active Directory.

"We are able to deliver higher quality applications, faster, thanks to the superior testing and debugging tools available in Visual COBOL. On average, applications are delivered up to 30% faster than before."

Mr. Costas Agrotis,
Director, Information and Technology Services for
Inland Revenue

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Development collaboration

A team of IRD C# developers and COBOL developers worked closely together, redesigning the application's user interface, from traditional 'green-screen' terminals to a Microsoft .NET web UI. Mr. Costas Agrotis, Director, Information and Technology Services for Inland Revenue comments: "Visual COBOL enabled the teams to work closer together even though they each have quite specific expertise. The integration between Visual Studio and Visual COBOL allowed the development teams to work in harmony from the start. A 25-year old COBOL application was easily moved onto a modern application platform and is now providing a set of reusable business objects which can be accessed by any user or application."

SYNTAX managed this project. In doing so, it developed the necessary communication layer which enabled the existing COBOL logic to be reused within a .NET architecture with minimal change and risk.

Improved performance and scalability

Moving to the new .NET platform has substantially improved reliability and scalability. With the old system based on an obsolete, unsupported platform, this posed a massive business risk. It was operating at the limits of its scalability, unable to accommodate additional users or flexibly respond to new government tax regulation. The agile, new environment can scale well beyond the capacity required and a performance improvement of 50% has been recorded for its nightly batch runs.

As part of the modernization project, reporting functionality was enhanced. Now extracting information from these business systems is much easier than before. Application security is better, through integration with Microsoft's Active Directory, making it easier to comply with continual regulation changes, and delivering new application auditing capability.

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Continual in-house development

One of the main business drivers for this application change was the IRD's inability to respond to new tax regulation and policy change. Using Visual COBOL, the IRD has seen drastic improvements. This project also focused on mitigating business risk. A fully maintained and supported environment is key to this, as Mr. Costas Agrotis explains: "Visual COBOL is now a critical component within our service delivery operations. Not only has it enabled us to adopt industry standard software development tools and a modern application architecture, but with regular product updates provided through the Micro Focus maintenance program, we can ensure our applications remain future-proof despite changes to the underlying deployment environment."

About Micro Focus

Micro Focus, a member of the FTSE 250, provides innovative software that allows companies to dramatically improve the business value of their enterprise applications. Micro Focus Enterprise Application Modernization, Testing and Management software enables customers' business applications to respond rapidly to market changes and embrace modern architectures with reduced cost and risk.

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