CICS TRANSACTION GATEWAY 9.2 open beta – podcast transcript

Nick - Hi, and welcome to the "Did you say Mainframe?" podcast series. This is where we regularly interview IBM technical experts who can help you to understand important IBM mainframe hardware and software issues. I'm your host Nick Garrod. Today, I'm joined by Andrew Smithson from the CICS Transaction Gateway development team and he's going to update us on what's been going on in the world of the CICS transaction gateway. So Andrew, thank you for joining us today.

Andrew - Thanks for having me back Nick, it's great to be here to talk about what we've been working on since the last time.

Nick - So as you mentioned the last time there Andrew, I think the last time you visited the hallowed portals of this portals of this office it was to talk about CICS transaction gateway 9.0. So what's happened in the meantime since 9.0 came out?

Andrew - Well we had a great spate of development work done and we produced CICS Transaction Gateway 9.1 which has got some incredible new features and branching out for CICS Transaction Gateway. the first of which is really is the mobile support with mobile being such a huge part of the computing landscape these days, we really wanted to make it possible for our customers to enable their CICS backend for mobile as quickly and as easily as possible. And CICS Transaction Gateway gives you a great way of doing that. so we now will support mobile workloads using JSON web services and that's not limited to any CICS server in particular if your CICS server is supported by CICS Transaction Gateway we will support mobile workload going to that so you get that all the qualities of service you would associate with CICS Transaction Gateway so we've got statistics in there we've got all the standard monitoring interfaces some goes out to SMF if you're on CICS Transaction Gateway for z and we've integrated that with our CICS explorer plug in as well so if you go and grab the latest version of that you get information about your mobile workload going through CICS Transaction Gateway there.

Nick -That falls into the IBM marketing around mobile so clearly the gateway is positioning itself to take advantage of CICS Transaction gateway of that. Are there any other points in 9.1?

Andrew - Some of the other things we had a couple of customer requirements coming in so we had a migration point customers noticed that where they'd been using CICS Transaction Gateway mostly on multiplatforms they had control over the connections between CICS Transaction Gateway and their backend systems on a per connection basis they were finding that they wanted to migrate to using IPIC with the extra qualities of service you get there and the extra functionality but they were missing that connection control piece so with 9.1 we filled that gap and you now get full connection management of your IPIC connected CICS regions through CICS Transaction Gateway. and this really adds a lot of extra functionality around high availability and control of your system because you need an outage of your CICS system but you've got some fail over systems there you can just take up the connection you need take down the CICS system do the maintenance bring them back up and then re-establish those connections and you get a seamless flow through the gateway without an on failure retry on systems you know aren't going to be there.

Nick - And it sounds like that's also validation of our RFE, or request for enhancement process that your actually reacting to these.

Andrew - Absolutely we really appreciate it when customers come in and say we like the product but it would be really great if we could do this or would it be good if we could have this as well, it really

gives us in the development team something to look at and know that were providing value to our customers. that also follows on with some of the enhanced security options we've put in, we had for a long time just for java kind of applications the ability to kind of identity propagation type thing where if you're using SSL you can have the clients certificate mapped to a user id that then went on and ran the transaction in CICS. so this was when you're using CICS transaction server on z. this is only really available for java clients as it was a bit clunky to configure and things like that, and with the added support in recent years for .net applications and z application with our ECIB2 API some of the functionality that's only available in java was being needed by these other places so for .net where we added SSL in version 9 support for SSL connections we've now in 9.1 given the option of mapping those clients certificates to RACF user id's. Even for using a .net based application on windows, so again that came in via RFE we had customers asking for that functionality and we listened and provided it and made that available there.

Nick - So really that's 3 very distinct topics all within just one release, a release after the original version came out with the mobile support the management of IP connections and the security, now I think that I've seen further news on CICS Transaction Gateway recently, an open beta?

Andrew - Yeah that's right just because we've got a release out doesn't mean we start to go back and rest on our laurels so again we had an RFE come in, in 9.1 we productised some functionality that was previously available as a support pack which allowed you to test java applications without the need to have a CICS Transaction Gateway or a CICS server running and that used some of the rational tooling that helped record and replay the information and again a customer saw that and we liked that they were using .net rather than java for their client applications. so we thought, we like this but we need it for .net so again we listened, we worked with that customer and we made the functionality available so you can test any CICS Transaction Gateway client application talking to a gateway without the need to have a CICS server running gin the backend chewing up miips just to run your test against. So now any application you record what should be going through, and replay that. so they're not only worked for the Java ECIB2 and .net applications, but also for mobile workloads as well if you want to test your mobile application to see if it's going to get a certain amount of data the you can do that without actually having to drive backend CICS miips.

Nick - So you can save money as well there.

Andrew - Yeah absolutely, save money, getting continuous integration Devops that are working that really begin to pick up and you can get a much quicker turn around on testing your application and getting that information back.

Nick -Right okay so when's this open beta available?

Andrew -The open beta is available right of this very moment! So go ahead and get it.

Nick - So where can I get it from then?

Andrew - If you head on to the main CICS download site, I'm sure Nick will be able to provide the links to this at the end of the podcast you can sign up there. The other key thing we forgot to mention on this one is that it's the first time that we've provided the CICS Transaction Gateway on windows and Linux as part of our open beta. So even if you don't have a z/OS system or you're not a z/OS customer or you want to try it in kind of a cloud environment such as on a soft layer virtual machine, CICS Transaction Gateway open beta is there for that. while were talking about that there's enhanced Linux support as well so were adding in support for the Ubuntu operating system which is

really useful in terms of it being a free Linux operating system that you can just get hold of and use so have a look at that in terms of things that have just come out around containers and support for that in things like BlueMix as well. so we've got support for that, we'll support the operating system that are being used, so you can actually run CICS Transaction Gateway in some of those new cloud style environment.

Andrew -That's great Andrew, there may be people listening to this that want to find out more about CICS Transaction Gateway. Are there any reference materials other than the information centre that might be useful?

Andrew - Yeah so obviously the knowledge centre is a great place to go first of all but we do have a CICS Transaction Gateway Redbook, so there's an introduction to the gateway volume one which gives you basic set up configuration how you use it type environment, we're also very active as a development team on the CICSdev website so go there there's blog posts from a number of members of the team and we're also looking to provide more samples through our presence on GitHub so you can go there you can start getting hold of the sample code and modifying it and using it as you see fit.

Nick - Okay that's great Andrew, so I'm going to put you on the spot now if that's okay I've been doing this to recent interviewees, what are the key points you'd like people to take from this short podcast?

Andrew - Okay so there's three key points.

Mobile - you've got mobile through CICS Transaction Gateway, no changes to your CICS backend system, supported to all versions of CICS TS TX series and VSE.

open beta - Available now, try it, free download go away and play with it, fully functional you can try all this new stuff out and see how it works whether it will still work for you.

CICSdev - Keep an eye on CICSdev were having a lot of fun trying things out and making stuff available and suggesting new things there.

Nick - Thats excellent Andrew thank you ever so much for coming in its been very interesting. Well, that wraps up this podcast discussion. To find out more about the CICS TG V9.2 open beta, please go to the description for this podcast at:
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