IBM

Bank Austria Creditanstalt Leasing automates vehicle leasing with tool based on IBM technology.

■ *Challenge*

The outdated IT infrastructure supporting BA-CA Leasing's popular online leasing application was plagued by performance problems, making it difficult to complete leasing arrangements online

■ *Why Become an On Demand Business?*

To provide customers with a fast and easy way to do business and protect its competitive position, BA-CA Leasing needed to deploy its leasing application in a resilient, open and scalable operating environment

■ *Solution*

BA-CA Leasing created a highly responsive technology platform and online solution that allows up to 1,000 concurrent users to complete transactions in realtime

■ *Key Benefits*

Enhanced responsiveness to customers to maintain competitive position; ability to support 100 percent more concurrent users than previous application; lower TCO; greater IT staff productivity by cutting development time in half for similar new application

BA-CA Leasing leverages IBM and Linux technology to power its international leasing programs throughout Europe — enhancing a 40-year track record of success.

Every few years, vehicle manufacturers tempt drivers with fresh looks and snazzy features. But realistically, we can't all afford to buy a new car as often as we overhaul, say, our wardrobes. That's one of the realities of life that makes leasing so attractive — and it's the activity that fuels Bank Austria Creditanstalt Leasing (BA-CA Leasing).

Vienna-based BA-CA Leasing (*www.ba-ca-leasing.com*) is the country's market leader in leasing services for cross-border, vendor and municipal vehicles. In addition to vehicle leasing, the company offers leasing programs for real estate, and

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— Georg Nechvatal, Software Engineer and Analyst, Bank Austria Creditanstalt Leasing

ON DEMAND BUSINESS™

On Demand Business Benefits

- BA-CA Leasing has enhanced customer service through a highly available realtime leasing calculator, serving 100 percent more concurrent users, enabling it to maintain its competitive position
- Increased number of customers expected to increase revenue
- With the new solution, BA-CA Leasing has reduced the TCO of its IT environment
- Open standards-based platform helps to enhance IT staff productivity by slashing development time for new application

"Linux on the xSeries system works perfectly for us, enabling us to be responsive to our customers' needs for a convenient leasing process while reducing our total cost of ownership."

– Georg Nechvatal

for construction, processing, production and transportation equipment. A wholly owned subsidiary of Bank Austria Creditanstalt Group, BA-CA Leasing has an impressive 40-year history of delivering innovative financial solutions. It employs nearly 900 people in offices throughout Austria and across Central and Eastern Europe.

Although BA-CA Leasing is known for its cutting-edge solutions, it became clear that the performance of its technology platform supporting the popular vehicle leasing program, was slow and in need of an upgrade. Customers were able to log onto BA-CA Leasing's Web site to calculate and submit leasing applications —however, as more people used the calculator program, performance began to degrade, causing long waiting periods. This made it difficult for customers to complete arrangements online—putting a damper on their leasing experience.

Get online and in the driver's seat

"We realized that we needed to upgrade our online leasing calculator if we wanted to maintain our competitive position. That meant delivering the fast, responsive service our customers demanded," explains Georg Nechvatal, software engineer and analyst, BA-CA Leasing. "We needed a calculator that would be available at all times to the customers who wanted to use it." By providing its customers realtime results to support their leasing decisions, the company could strengthen the service levels that have been integral to its success. And there was no better time to complete the upgrade than during Austria's transition to the euro.

To meet its challenges, BA-CA Leasing worked with IBM Global Services - Integrated Technology Services to overhaul its operating processes on two levels. A new online leasing calculator system was created using open standards and migrated to a robust new hardware foundation. Additionally, BA-CA Leasing invested in a technology platform that creates an environment for growth and enables realtime responsiveness to hundreds of concurrent users.

This new leasing calculator system has enabled customers to complete a leasing proposal in just minutes, compared to the previous application, which was particularly slow under heavy workloads. The calculator supports at least 1,000 concurrent users—100 percent more than its predecessor. And, the new technology platform positions BA-CA Leasing to enhance its other financial solutions by providing it with a reusable infrastructure for application development. Based on open standards, the solution enables the company to scale its capabilities to continue to respond to its customers' needs as the business grows.

From the Web interface, the customer selects a vehicle type, the lease term and price, then the system calculates in realtime the monthly payments for the customer and routes the online form to the Vehicle Leasing Department. Underwriters then process the form manually, contacting the customer by telephone to discuss any details and finalize the agreement.

"We work directly with car dealers to procure the leased vehicles," says Nechvatal. "And that has allowed us to provide the largest amount of variety to this self-service channel."

Steering the course with proven practices
BA-CA Leasing's IT team designed, developed and implemented the e-calculator application in about six months. They selected WebSphere software from IBM, for an open standards, Java™ technology-based solution. The application resides on a hardware foundation of three IBM @server® iSeries™ systems, and three IBM @server xSeries® systems running Red Hat Linux.

"We have in-house expertise with Linux. And, given the fact that Linux has proven to be very reliable and inexpensive, we wanted to try it out for our online vehicle leasing application," says Nechvatal. "Linux on the xSeries system works perfectly for us, enabling us to be responsive to our customers' needs for a convenient leasing process while reducing our total cost of ownership."

The BA-CA Leasing and IBM team used IBM WebSphere Studio Application Developer to create the Java servlets that provide the business logic. And, by using the IBM Rational® Unified Process® development platform—an iterative development methodology—the team was able to adapt quickly to changing business needs by delivering code in smaller, more concise iterations. Notes Nechvatal, "As the project progressed, the developers were able to mitigate risk, reduce complexity in the design phase and ultimately increase productivity while reaching key project milestones."

IBM Global Services also worked with the bank to implement IBM WebSphere® Application Server, the runtime engine, on an iSeries 270 system. And, the team configured and installed the three xSeries systems, which function as the firewall and as concurrent versions systems (CVS) and HTTP servers. IBM DB2® Universal Database™ is on the back-end iSeries system, managing all of the information associated with customer accounts and leasing options.

Key Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere Application Server Advanced, Version 4
- IBM WebSphere Studio Application Developer, Version 5
- IBM DB2 Universal Database
- IBM Rational Unified Process
- Red Hat Linux

Servers

- IBM @server iSeries 270
- IBM @server xSeries 350

Services

- IBM Global Services - Integrated Technology Services

When a customer signs on, his or her browser accesses the xSeries HTTP server, which invokes servlets. The servlets, in turn, make Java Database Connectivity (JDBC) calls to retrieve requested information from DB2 and deliver it to the front end.

Rapid development with open technologies

As BA-CA Leasing evaluated technologies for its new application, its goal was to tap into its IT staff's existing skills. That led not only to Linux but also to the iSeries systems. Says Nechvatal, "We've been using iSeries technology since 1989, so we've got in-depth knowledge. Its reliability has been key, particularly for the 380 employees who rely daily on the business applications that it supports."

Pleased with the functionality of the iSeries, the company looked no further than the xSeries platform to complete its hardware environment. "We like that the xSeries systems can be easily racked and stacked—that saves floor space and associated costs, complementing the affordability of Linux," notes Nechvatal.

By using open standards-based technologies to develop its leasing calculator, BA-CA Leasing took advantage of the object reusability of its existing application to create a similar solution for equipment leasing. Corporate customers can now calculate in realtime their monthly payments for various types of equipment and send their proposals to the financing experts.

"Developing our equipment leasing calculator took only four months— half the time we expected, thanks to the ease of development with the WebSphere software components and the reusable objects," says Nechvatal. "And because our application frees employees from answering basic questions about equipment leasing, they can focus on building customer relationships and more complex, value-added tasks."

Growing the business on Linux

In the first year after launching the online solution, more than 55,000 consumers have logged on and completed the five steps to submit a leasing proposal. "Our e-calculator application is attracting much more usage than we had anticipated," says Nechvatal. "We're expecting that our solution will drive up revenue, as customers find it an efficient and easy way to secure a leasing agreement with us. This self-service channel also enhances our productivity, because customers have fewer questions when we've got them on the phone."

After a successful first foray into Linux, BA-CA Leasing is ready to explore ways to extend the open-source operating system into its IT environment. "With @server systems, IBM on demand software and Linux powering our online leasing calculators, we're confident we can deliver the high availability and rapid response time that drives our growing customer base," says Nechvatal. "And we know that Linux provides a solid option to support other aspects of our data center."

For more information

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