



The Mainstream

An article from the IBM @server zSeries software newsletter

Find the current version of The Mainstream here ibm.com/software/zseries/mainstream

Breaking up isn't hard to do: EBSCO leaves its software vendor and hooks up with IBM

*from The Mainstream, Issue 8 - 2004
The IBM @server zSeries and S/390 software newsletter*

EBSCO is a leader in information access and management solutions for the library and business communities. This 60-year-old company is truly global, with 50 divisions and subsidiaries worldwide. EBSCO's data repository comprises 260,000 titles and 50,000 publishers, running under IBM® DB2® software.

Recently, the company upgraded to a new IBM zSeries® 800 processor. But during the evaluation of the upgrade, EBSCO quickly realized that its current ISV's software costs associated with the CPU upgrade would be nearly prohibitive.

EBSCO's management chose a better way. Teaming with IBM, the company moved forward with the hardware upgrade and replaced its existing ISV software with 14 IBM software products.

EBSCO realized a 20% savings in software licensing, while maintaining most existing product function. They successfully completed the software migration and CPU upgrade, on time and at lower cost.

Recently, Mainstream caught up with EBSCO's John Fitts, General Manager and VP of Information Systems and Services, and David Wyatt, Manager of Technical Support, as well as their IBM representative, Doug Moore.

Q: Tell us about EBSCO's IT infrastructure.

John: Our IT infrastructure is very important to EBSCO because it's the last line between us and our customers. We're in the electronic general business and the electronic data base business,



ibm.com/software/zseries/mainstream

we actually provide the information to the customers. But we also handle the financial transaction in that situation between the customer and a publisher. So we are in a three-way configuration: providing the service to the customer, and also providing a service to the publisher. We have a very heavy online transaction processing load on our mainframe, LANs and WANs, as well as on our customer-facing web services. Currently, we take in about 100 million page views per month, just on our web services. So our infrastructure is critical to the success of EBSCO and the level of service we provide our customers.

Q: What prompted you to upgrade your mainframe and its software?

John: We have been very successful in some major acquisitions. We've been able to retain our current customer base and add customers. Also, one of our businesses is transitioning to an internal electronic journals area. That increased our requirements, and increases our need for more throughput through all of our system. We were at a point where we had to increase the throughput on the mainframe. We went from an IBM 9672 RC6 to z800, 2066-003 machine, and we went from 317 MIPS on the previous machine, to 499 on the current machine.

David: The lease on our current mainframe was also up, so we had to start planning software migration and its costs, depending on the type of hardware.

Q: Why didn't you just renew with your current software vendor?

John: We were unsatisfied with our previous mainframe software provider, for several reasons. One, we considered their pricing to be predatory. They would not work with us in any fashion in regards to their charges for their software. We were looking at almost a doubling of our software cost, and we had absolutely nothing to gain from doing it other than being able to upgrade our hardware. So they brought no value to the table for those additional charges. Our business was growing, we were very successful, and they intended to get a large part of our income, simply because of our success. They were rigid, and they would not negotiate on good terms. Therefore, we started looking for alternatives.



ibm.com/software/zseries/mainstream

Q: So how did the software conversation with IBM originate?

John: It began as we looked at our pending mainframe hardware upgrade. We looked at the costs of the hardware upgrade. Then we looked at the cost of the software upgrade that our previous vendor was going to charge us. And we quickly realized that we had to get a little more creative before we could make this change because the software change was actually going to be greater than the cost for the hardware upgrade.

I discussed this with Doug Moore, our IBM representative. He came back to the table with a proposal where IBM had matched the software set that we needed to replace one-for-one. We began discussions on what we could do in the time frame. IBM had to get the pricing right on the offer and meet the time deadline to make the deal work.

Q: How did you feel about leaving your previous software vendor to switch over to IBM?

John: Very positive, because we had a long history of problems in dealing with that vendor. I always felt their pricing was predatory. Unfortunately, they had a very strong position in the market, they had the software that we needed, and we really didn't have any good option. We had several meetings with them, trying to negotiate the pricing down so we could make this hardware upgrade. But their position was quite rigid. There was very little flexibility in the pricing, even though we had a situation where we simply had to perform the upgrade.

So, when IBM demonstrated that there was an option, we were very happy to see that. And we were curious to see the side-by-side comparisons of the product in action. The IBM offer was very strong in regards to the functionality of the two sets we were looking at. I had a lot of staff meetings, a lot of serious discussions with staff members and another department of 290 people. All of the staff managers finally voted that we should go with the proposal from IBM and remove the previous software vendor from EBSCO.



ibm.com/software/zseries/mainstream

Q: After IBM made its offer, did you go back to your previous software vendor and ask them to re-negotiate?

John: Yes. Once we had IBM's final proposal and pricing, we set up a final call with our vendor. They came in with what they said was their final offer. We told them their offer wasn't close to the one that we had in hand, and that we would be leaving them and going to IBM for the software sets we needed. At the end of the meeting, their sales representative pulled out a spreadsheet and said, "This is actually my final offer." He'd cut the price about 30 percent from what they told us was their final offer. At that point, we made up our minds that the correct decision was to go with IBM.

Q: You were under intense time pressure. What was your feeling about IBM's ability to meet your deadline?

John: The more IBM and EBSCO looked into the prospect of converting product sets, the more confidence we had that we could pull this off in the time frame that we had to accomplish the task.

David: We started in February actually discussing this. And we had to have everything done by September 1. We were talking about 14 products—both system management and data management products—that we had to convert over. And several of those were major products that could normally take anywhere from nine to 12 months to convert. I kept asking the people who were giving us the proposal from IBM, "Are you sure you can do this by September?" They always came back and said yes.

“The IBM experts knew what the parameters were, and they were able to do this in a third of the time.”

ibm.com/software/zseries/mainstream

Q: So what was the division of labor between EBSCO and IBM?

David: With the time constraints we had, there was no way we could do this all by ourselves. We installed all the software. But the customization usually takes longer than anything else. And that's where we had to rely heavily on IBM's input. In many cases, they sat down and did the customization themselves, because we just did not have the time to go through the books and go through all the different parameters. The IBM experts knew what they were, and they were able to do this in a third of the time. Basically, this migration could never have been completed without IBM's input.

David: That's right. With the knowledge that IBM brought to the table, we didn't have to rely on internal staff for much of the customization. There was no need to ask our staff to stop what they were doing in their other tasks to either acquire that knowledge, or to apply their own experiences to the customization in progress. As a result, our staff's existing projects were never at risk of falling by the way side.

John: In many cases IBM and EBSCO were working side by side during the customization. Instead of trying to look at the books and do some research, we were just able to ask the IBM experts questions. They in turn asked EBSCO other questions to determine what needed to be done. So instead of spending maybe 30 minutes on a particular situation, we found that we were spending about 1 minute, possibly two, specifically because the knowledge was already there.

“Instead of spending maybe 30 minutes on a particular situation, you are spending about a minute or two, because the knowledge is already there.”

Q: During some of the more complex or larger migrations, did EBSCO expect IBM to complete the migrations of the repetitive processes? Or did they expect IBM to train the EBSCO people to do it?

John: Sometimes it was IBM and in many times it was EBSCO. So it was a combination.



ibm.com/software/zseries/mainstream

Q: Doug, what were the actual software products being installed and customized?

Doug: The IBM DB2 tools we installed were the DB2 Log Analysis Tools, DB2 Query Monitor, DB2 SQL Performance Analyzer and DB2 Performance Expert.* We also migrated a management system, a scheduler and a job scheduling system.

Q: Let's talk a little about hardware. How do you feel about the capabilities that you're getting with the zSeries800?

John: With the z800, we're able to handle the load capacity that we have on all of our core legacy applications as they are put in. So it's very strategic to the infrastructure, and it's able to support all of our offices around the world.

We can bring in a lot of the features that previously were not on a mainframe, such as Linux. We can look at server consolidation and many other aspects that, prior to this, we could not have on the mainframe. We are also running DB2 on the mainframe, and we are using that as a platform for data repository for all of our web services.

We have a major initiative to use realtime data on all our web services directly to the DB2 databases. In the past, we had to do extracts and downloads over to our web services. We are changing all that by going directly to the mainframe and to the DB2 legacy files to process our web transactions. The benefit of this is we can now go at the realtime data the same way we do from the mainframe. And we do not have delays. The data is current, and all the extra patch work that has to take place between the mainframe and the web services is eliminated.

Q: Has the access to realtime data helped you improve your overall business position, or increased the performance of your overall operation?

John: Yes. The value of having realtime data access from our web services to our DB2 database is absolutely critical. We are in the electronic journal business, and when people order electronic journals, they expect to have immediate access to them—not in two days or two weeks,



ibm.com/software/zseries/mainstream

but immediately. In the print world, people were quite comfortable in receiving their first issue 36 or 90 days after they placed the order. In the electronic world, of course, that's not the case. Time is short, and we have to be able to deliver realtime data to meet the needs of that particular business.

This has allowed us to take a customer order for an electronic journal, have a transaction with the publisher or publishers involved with that order, provide the customer access to that journal, in some cases in 24 hours. In order to execute these business processes, you have to have realtime data. So having realtime data access from our web services is absolutely key for our ongoing efforts in providing instantaneous access to the products that we sell and service.

Q: And your overall satisfaction level?

John: Our total cost of ownership has decreased. We feel like we got to work in partnership with IBM. So yes, we are happy that we made the change. We are happy with the bottom-line results that came with that for us. And so far, we have been very satisfied that we've made the change.

David: It sets EBSCO up to handle future or additional mainframe changes, modifications, and the like. We would like to work every day and feel like our objective is to grow the business. And so we are happy with the results of our change. As a result of working with IBM organizations, we do feel that we are now well positioned to lead the company forward.

*

Other IBM products used in the upgrade were: IBM Tivoli® NetView®, Debug Tool for z/OSTM, DFSM Smmm, IBM Tivoli Systems Automation, IBM Tivoli Workload Scheduler, Debug Tool Utilities, Fault Analyzer, File Manager, Breeze for SCLM and Migration Utility.

DB2, IBM, the IBM logo, DB2, NetView, Tivoli, z/OS and zSeries are trademarks or registered trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation in the United States, other countries, or both.

Other company, product and service names may be trademarks, or service marks of others.