MQSeries - A force for business transformation

Four years ago, Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company set itself a goal - to make itself an ‘easy-to-do-business-with’ organisation. Rated as one of the USA’s top thirty insurance companies, Connecticut Mutual recognised that to grow its market share the company needed to place a focus on its customers rather than on policies, products and administrative procedures.

The Company undertook a radical re-engineering of its business processes, turning itself from a product-driven to a customer-responsive organisation. Previously a customer would deal with as many different departments as there were policies, and possibly wait for days for a response while reports and paperwork were produced.

The new infrastructure allows one customer service representative to call up on a single computer screen all policy information, letters, documents, enquiries and actions relating to an individual person. Each customer receives a full, fast response to his or her enquiries in the course of a single telephone call.

Satisfying the customer

“Customers judge our responsiveness and the quality of our service against the highest standards anywhere in the consumer marketplace,” explained Ron Baker, second vice-president at Connecticut Mutual. “We have to match up or the business goes elsewhere. We’ve changed our organisation to present a single image of Connecticut Mutual to customers and encourage them to want to do business with us. That required a dramatic change to our business processes and presented an even bigger challenge to our computing technology.”

“IBM′s commercial messaging product, MQSeries, is a critical tool in enabling us to meet that technology challenge.”

Over the years, Connecticut Mutual had assembled a variety of computer platforms from different vendors, each processing different types of policy transaction or used for different business function. Key components were an ES9000 mainframe, RISC System/6000s, DEC MicroVAXes, Wang VS and intelligent

Application	Integration of customer services
Software	IBM MQSeries for OS/400 AIX DEC VMS
Hardware	IBM ES/9000 Mainframe IBM RISC System/6000 IBM AS/400 IBM PC’s DEC Wang

MQSeries enabled better customer service at Connecticut Mutual Life workstations on the desktop. In addition, the processing of customer policies and transactions involves interconnection with other computer systems within third-party organisations which, for example, provide personal history information for the underwriting process.

Simplifying complex technologies

In order to provide a blue chip, world-class service to customers, the company set about automating the desktop of its customer service representatives. It created a single, customer-oriented front-end to all of the computer systems. This required information from each of the computer systems to be made accessible in real-time on the service representative′s screen, so that he or she would be able to provide a rapid and comprehensive response to customer requests or enquiries.

“Initially we built direct communications interfaces between each of the platforms because that was the best available solution at the time,” explained Jerry St Marie, Connecticut Mutual′s Director of Network Systems. “That called for a wide range of skills and expertise for the different protocols and platforms. We had to build communications interfaces into each application and repeat the process time and again for each program. The cost in terms of development effort and computer resources was enormous and, because in some instances there were many steps in the communication chain, reliability levels were less than satisfactory.”

“We are now replacing those complex connections with message queuing, using MQSeries Commercial Messaging as the common interface between all of our platforms. MQSeries simplifies the integration process and means that our application developers no longer have to become experts in network communications. They can focus on business solutions without having to worry about the technology that links the separate elements of our computer infrastructure together.”

Productivity savings

In one process, in which a third-party organisation is involved in providing personal history information before a policy for a new customer is underwritten, information had to pass between two organisations and across several different vendor platforms. There were a total of 17 points of potential failure and, although faster than the previous Federal Express mail service, the two to three day turnaround was incompatible with Connecticut Mutual′s customer service aspirations.

Using MQSeries Commercial Messaging, the number of links is reduced to three and the turnaround time is down to a matter of hours and minutes. That has a direct bearing on the speed at which Connecticut Mutual customers have their policies implemented.

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An area where MQSeries Commercial Messaging has potential to generate considerable cost savings is in the interaction between batch and on-line CICS applications. Connecticut Mutual runs a continuous, high-availability operation, and batch processes for activities, such as backing up datasets, required that CICS applications repetitively cycle to open and close data files in sync with the batch processes. The polling instructions needed to integrated the batch and on-line processes accumulated to 6 million transactions each month, approximately 20% of CICS transactions.

These have been eliminated through the message queuing procedures within MQSeries which guarantee the delivery of each instruction. As a result, hardware is freed for other business applications and the need to purchase additional processing capacity is deferred.

Connecticut Mutual has a technology strategy based on open systems and multiple vendors. It aims to get the best solution from the marketplace and recognises that no single vendor offers best of breed solutions in all areas.

Reduced development timescales

“MQSeries Commercial Messaging supports this open systems strategy, and provides the glue that lets us integrate applications running on different makes of hardware platform,” Ron Baker concluded. “It moves connectivity considerations to a lower level, and reduces programming effort because our developers don′t need to repetitively code communications into individual applications. That will save substantial development dollars and reduced development timescales mean we can deliver applications to further improve our business processes faster, easier and more reliably.”

For more information please contact

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The IBM software home page can be found on the internet at
http://www.software.ibm.com

The MQSeries software home page can be found in the Internet at
http://www.hursley.ibm.com/mqseries

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