

National Life discovers transparent migration path with IBM and ATERAS.

Overview

■ **Application**

Migration of information management platform from Computer Associates IDMS to IBM DB2® Universal Database™

■ **Business Benefits**

Transparent migration with no downtime; reliable availability of technical support; lower cost of licensing and maintenance; ability to create and integrate enhanced client-server and Web applications due to open-systems information management platform

■ **Software**

*IBM DB2 Universal Database;
IBM CICS®*

■ **Business Partner**

ATERAS



Founded in 1850, National Life has established itself as one of America's most innovative life insurance providers by continually updating its coverage and policy provisions.

Philosophers often speak of the importance of “the journey” —suggesting that doing one’s best at every step leads to a positive outcome at the destination. The employees of National Life Insurance Company (National Life) would probably agree with this premise. Based in Montpelier, Vermont, National Life is among the nation’s oldest insurance providers. Its cadre of associates—including 4,000 career and independent agents—reflect National Life’s ongoing quest for service excellence.

“The long-term benefit of migrating to the IBM DB2 and CICS solution is that we will be able to be more responsive to our internal customers.”

—Barry Ibey, Second Vice President, Corporate Systems, National Life Insurance



IBM and ATERAS provided technology, planning and service expertise in completing a transparent database migration for National Life.

Over the years, the \$480 million company had found it increasingly difficult to hire skilled staff to support its Computer Associates IDMS database, necessitating a migration to a new platform. But the company wanted to avoid any interruptions that might impact its revenue stream, customer service level, or the productivity of its staff—even for a single day. That's why a primary objective was to make the migration as transparent as possible to users, who were accustomed to, and dependent on, minute-to-minute interaction with their business applications and interfaces. To accomplish this goal, the company chose to migrate its information management environment from IDMS to IBM DB2 Universal Database.

The selection of DB2 as the new information management platform was easy, as a reliable DB2 Universal Database mainframe application had managed the company's sales

and marketing data for years. DB2's preeminence also solved the IDMS problem by helping to ensure the availability of an abundant pool of technical support staff. But National Life wondered whether the IDMS to DB2 migration could be carried out without managing multiple vendors or disrupting users.

IBM Business Partner ATERAS (formerly Sophisticated Business Systems, Inc.) stepped forward with a resounding "yes." Experienced in both IDMS and DB2, ATERAS was ideal to serve as the one-stop service provider for the migration. After comprehensive planning with IBM on the major undertaking, ATERAS migrated five databases and five associated proprietary applications that access them.

While the project is still in the acceptance-testing phase, National Life now has much more than the memory of an unfettered conversion. It also has a flexible information management platform based on DB2 and IBM CICS that will allow the more efficient use of internal resources and provide a foundation for enhanced client-server and Web-based applications.

“There’s a reason why DB2 is our target database when IDMS users and other mainframe customers need to migrate. DB2 is much less costly than other alternatives, such as Oracle, and requires far fewer database administrators for its ongoing operation.”

—Cindy Howard, Executive Vice President, ATERAS

Says Barry Ibey, National Life's second vice president, corporate systems development, "Since migrating from IDMS to DB2, we can now rely on having technical expertise for supporting the database and our internal users whenever we need it. We also have an open-systems information management environment that will allow us to enrich our customer portal on the Web."

An open-systems information management platform

DB2 will support and manage a broad spectrum of applications, including a comprehensive index of customers and their policies, commission calculations and payments, and company sales statistics. The information management platform will also serve as an administration system engine, handling all the calculations and processing for the company's universal life policies.

According to Ibey, DB2 will simplify information management behind the scenes at National Life. "Moving to DB2 allows us to eliminate some of the complexity in the IDMS environment that was bothersome," he observes. For instance, Automated System Facility (ASF), an IDMS component that requires a user to enter and work with a complex array of data structures and business tables, became outmoded as fewer



National Life agents utilize the company's reliable, high-performance DB2 information management platform to provide customers with up-to-date policy information.

and fewer people understood its use. The DB2 solution provides a more easily managed and maintained application. The IDMS environment also drained resources by requiring that information be extracted and reloaded into a SQL environment before presentation on the Web. DB2 eliminates the intermediary step—and the associated overhead.

"One reason we selected DB2 as our information management platform was its flexibility in both client-server and Web environments," Ibey notes. "The ability to access customer information directly from DB2 and present it on the Web, something we weren't able to do very easily with IDMS, will be a big benefit for us."

Adds ATERAS Executive Vice President Cindy Howard, "IBM has gone to great lengths to ensure that its customers can interact with disparate third-party systems. The open-systems approach, a fundamental part of IBM's e-business strategy, is a big advantage to any company."

A transparent migration from IDMS to DB2

ATERAS has a long history in the conversion of IDMS databases and applications to DB2. Its suite of DB-Shuttle® tools assesses and analyzes the mainframe environment and its applications; automatically converts the databases, applications, and languages while assuring the integrity and completeness of the converted data; and tunes up the new environment. During the conversion phase,

the ATERAS toolset allows offloading of about 400,000 records per minute, with similar load times into the target database.

“We’ve been converting IDMS applications and databases to DB2 on the mainframe for 12 years,” says Howard. “There’s a reason why DB2 is our target database when IDMS users and other mainframe customers need to migrate. Like National Life, most of our customers are large and have thousands of end users relying on mission critical applications. DB2 is much less costly than other alternatives, such as Oracle, and requires far fewer database administrators for its ongoing operation.”

Howard surmises, and Ibey agrees, that migration to DB2 from IDMS is a growing trend in the insurance industry, driven largely by DB2’s open-systems capabilities. Because National Life is recognized as an innovator, its position as frontrunner in the movement is no surprise.

Improved responsiveness with DB2

National Life’s future plans include self-service Web applications that will allow customers to readily access and change their account information, thereby improving customer service while freeing up company resources for other projects. Ibey also has many requests from the company’s various business areas for application enhancements which will improve efficient information delivery—something developers expect will be facilitated by DB2.

“In recent years, some of our applications had been languishing because we didn’t have the technical knowledge necessary to enhance them,” says Ibey. “The long-term benefit of migrating to the IBM DB2 and CICS solution is that we will be able to be more responsive to our internal customers.” In other words, the journey—and the focus on excellence—is right on track.

For more information

Please contact your IBM marketing representative, IBM Business Partner or IBM Direct at: 1 800 IBM-CALL.

Visit our Web site at ibm.com/software/data

For more information about National Life Insurance Company, visit: www.nationallife.com

For more information about ATERAS, visit: www.ateras.com



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Silicon Valley Laboratory
555 Bailey Avenue
San Jose, CA 95141
U.S.A.

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