Customer Reference Story | CalSTRS | Government | Adabas, Natural, webMethods EntireX

PROJECTS COMPLETED WEEKS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE—AND UNDER BUDGET

Challenge

The Enterprise Initiatives and Technology department of California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) needed a reliable way to deliver applications to internal customers, improve data accuracy, build linkages to other systems and offer "self-service" Web access.

Solution

The department decided to do all development in-house so that it could control quality and build applications more quickly. Natural and Adabas were chosen as the platform for application development. webMethods EntireX and XML are used for integration, data access and exchange.

Benefits

- Projects are often completed weeks ahead of schedule and under budget.
- Since Natural is operating system independent, large batch testing is done on a Windows-based server, saving about $1.5 million a year in mainframe usage fees.
- Due to improved data access and accuracy, teacher inquiries are often answered instantly, rather than taking weeks or months.
- It was possible to reduce the average number of defects from two per module, to now only one defect per 200 modules.

CALSTRS

The California State Teachers' Retirement System (www.calstrs.com) is the second largest public pension plan and the largest teachers' retirement fund in the United States. CalSTRS had a total membership of over 800,000 and assets of $127.5 billion as of October 31, 2009. CalSTRS' primary responsibility is to provide retirement-related benefits and services to teachers in public schools from kindergarten through community college.

Get There Faster.™

"We chose Natural and Adabas from Software AG because, based on our research, these products gave us the highest probability of success."

Bill Hobbs | Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Enterprise Initiatives and Technology | CalSTRS

Adabas and Natural create reliable platform for on-time and under-budget application development

How often does an IT department complete applications on time and under budget? If you ask Bill Hobbs, the answer would be "frequently!" Hobbs is the Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Enterprise Initiatives and Technology for the California State Teachers' Retirement System. This system tracks benefits, and calculates and disburses payments for the multi-billion-dollar pension system supporting California's hundreds of thousands of current and retired teachers. At any given time, Hobbs' staff oversees nearly 20 system enhancement projects to support his internal customers, such as the people who manage survivor benefits, process retirement applications and provide employer payroll reporting.

To improve the application-development process, Hobbs spear-headed an effort to bring application development in-house. "We knew that if we were going to deliver the class of service demanded of our internal customers, we couldn't contract outside anymore. We had to take charge of our development process and implement a complete internally managed, development and project management process including a solid Quality Assurance Methodology. But we are conservative. We chose Natural and Adabas from Software AG because, based on our research, these products gave us the highest probability of success," says Hobbs.

"Previously, we thought we needed to be mainframe or non-mainframe, but are in fact discovering that our applications are spanning all technology and Adabas is a good fit for this purpose. And Natural really supports our quality methodology. It's elegant, yet simple. It's been very easy to train staff so the ramp-up time is quick, and that means fewer errors." Hobbs reports that his staff reduced the average number of defects from two per module, to now only one defect per 200 modules.

A phased approach

Our goal was to provide better service to our internal customers so they, in turn, could provide better service to our members. Phase one was to make sure to get the system right by choosing a reliable platform. Phase two was to eliminate redundant data by creating a central repository built on Adabas. Phase three is to use webMethods EntireX to create linkages with internal systems. The next step is to communicate with the outside world by using webMethods EntireX and XML to further integrate and Web-enable portions of the system so users can have realtime access.

Keeping pace and meeting expectations

"Several years ago, if you called our organization, sometimes you got through to a person, and sometimes you didn't. But now there is an expectation that someone can respond to your question on the spot," says Hobbs. Prior to Adabas, the system did not process end-to-end in any area, so data quality was a huge concern. "The system couldn't even process an application for retirement without a lot of manual effort, and we couldn't answer even the simplest question about a person's current status."

With the Software AG solution, call-center operators are often able to answer questions correctly, and instantly—on the spot. This allows us to stay close to members and provide the level of service they expect in today's competitive market. CalSTRS will continue to improve service now that they're positioned to clean up the data problems that existed in prior systems.

Moving ahead at CalSTRS

Hobbs is not only pleased about the success of their efforts, but remarked at how the organization came to embrace the mainframe application process. Hobbs is using Software AG's webMethods EntireX to further develop self-service Web access to the system and plans to add retirement calculations based on real-time data. Hobbs points out that, "we chose Software AG because of their product reliability and company stability. Plus, the way they've embraced XML gives us even more flexibility than we originally had hoped."

KEY COMPONENTS

Natural and **Adabas** were chosen as the platform for reliable application development.

webMethods EntireX provides the gateway between the data on the mainframe and the Web.

Take the next step to get there – faster.

ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

Software AG's 4,000 global customers use our software to improve business processes and drive an agile IT infrastructure. Our customers' goals are to reduce costs and increase flexibility and efficiency. We help them do this by optimizing and governing their operations and aligning IT with the business goals.

Our leading Business Infrastructure Software portfolio is used for data and system integration and modernization. It fosters new levels of IT agility through SOA and allows the rapid creation of new business processes with BPM.

Our forty-year history of success ensures our customers have a reliable platform for driving future business results – faster.

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