

## MODERNIZATION FAST—TAKING MAINFRAME DATA TO THE WEB

### Challenge

The California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) wanted to create a comprehensive network of contractor licensing information and provide many disparate communities of users with a Web-based, easy-to-use system for applying for and checking on contractor licenses and taking contractor exams.

### Solution

The board moved its mainframe-based, green-screen system the Web using webMethods EntireX, which acts a gateway between data stored on the mainframe and the Web.

### Benefits

Contractors experience less frustration when applying for and checking on the status of licenses. The board saves significantly in administrative time and effort. Data accuracy is increased due to the automated, Web-enabled nature of the system. Consumers and businesses have real-time access to updated contractor license information.



The California CSLB ([www.cslb.ca.gov/](http://www.cslb.ca.gov/)) protects consumers by licensing and regulating California's construction industry. There are more than 310,000 licensed contractors in the state in 43 different licensing classifications. The board also investigates more than 20,000 complaints each year against licensed and unlicensed contractors. In fiscal year 2007/08, the CSLB obtained more than \$35.2 million in ordered restitution for consumers.

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**“People used to have to call us to get information but now they just use the Web. It’s particularly helpful because often, due to large volume of calls, it was difficult for customers to get through on our phone system. **The Web component has been a resounding success.**”**

Debbie Phelps | Senior Programmer, Analyst, Supervisor | The Information Systems Division

## California Licensing Authority expands functionality of information-rich contractor licensing system

The California CSLB is the state authority for all contractor licensing information and permits. The board offers services to four distinct categories of users: contractors and potential contractors; businesses; California state employees; and the general public. The technology staff wrote the system using a combination of Software AG’s Natural programming language and Adabas as the database of choice. That combination of technologies made a great deal of sense for the technology staff, which had been using Adabas and Natural for other systems development with great success, says Debbie Phelps, Senior Programmer/Analyst/Supervisor in the Board’s information systems division. Until the Web-based system was launched, many businesses and the general public—as well as a large number of contractors—simply didn’t have access to the datarich system. The system was confined to an IBM mainframe in a state data center in Rancho Cordova, California. Anyone needing access had to sign up through the board, receive a user ID and password, and then access the system through a green-screen application. By incorporating webMethods EntireX as a gateway between data stored on the mainframe and the Web, contractors can now take exams, apply for licenses and check the status of their license applications via a Web browser. In addition, companies and consumers looking to hire contractors can check whether the contractor is licensed and ensure that the contractor’s areas of expertise meet their needs.

## Getting information out—faster

“All of these people used to have to call us to get information, but now they just use the Web,” Phelps said. “It’s particularly helpful because often, due to large volume of calls, it was difficult for customers to get through on our phone system. And it’s real-time data, so the information they get is the same information they would get if they called in.” Using the system, consumers and businesses can enter a contractor license number, business name or a person’s name. Based on that information, they can find detailed information on a license, including business name, address, phone number, date of issuance and expiration, and a list of classifications. They can also order complaint forms. Contractors can use the system to more efficiently check on the status of a license, and order forms including applications and name and address changes. A Web-accessible contractors’ booklet enables contractors to take the open-book Home Improvement Certification Exam. After taking the test, the system informs contractors of their scores and whether they passed or failed.

## Keeping data accurate, making staff more efficient

Even board employees benefit from the system. In addition to allowing them to process orders for applications, address changes and complaints more efficiently, it cuts down on the staff necessary to fulfill the orders and answer phone inquiries. Using an automated system to generate requests also decreases the chance that the wrong forms will be sent out. “They just go to a file that we print daily, and we print labels from that,” Phelps explains. “The less human intervention, the more efficient. No one has to type labels to send information to people anymore.”

## 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.

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### ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

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