



Highlights

- Preserved valuable application assets and irreplaceable programming skills
- Enabled organization to take advantage of modern Java technology
- Retained long term customers and gained new sales opportunities
- Provided Web enablement, SOA, and Web Services
- Offered enhanced graphical user interface (GUI) capabilities

InfoTrax Modernizes Sales Support Applications isCOBOL Assists Industry Leader Evolve Software Assets; Integrate Java, Web Services, & SOA into Software Solutions

InfoTrax was finding that more current and prospective customers wanted SOA and Web Services-based tools to support their sales functions, and there was a growing need for the InfoTrax software to interface with a greater number of third-party tools. Because of these evolving market needs, the company decided to modernize its sales support applications and seamlessly integrate with newer technologies like Java and XML using the isCOBOL™ Application Platform Suite (APS) from Veryant.

Innovative software solutions for sales and marketing

For more than 30 years, InfoTrax has provided software solutions for direct sales and multi-level marketing organizations worldwide. The company's advanced tools help businesses with online distribution, warehouse automation, commission processing, sales organization maintenance, distributor communications and training, and much more.

The company's applications – DataTrax, InfoTrax Virtual Office, and InfoTrax Commission Consulting – had previously been deployed using the ACUCOBOL-GT® Runtime Environment. Highly valued in the marketplace, these proven applications had been used with success for many years; the company has a history of innovative ideas and products.

InfoTrax had tried a combination of custom tools and workarounds to incorporate the modern technology solutions and third-party XML interfaces customers desired for functionality such as credit card payment systems and sales tax calculations. However, these workaround solutions were time-consuming to implement and maintain on the proprietary ACUCOBOL-GT platform. InfoTrax wanted a solution that could use open, standard interfaces and run on a standardized Java Virtual Machine (JVM) environment.

The company then decided to modernize its applications. The goal was to preserve the millions of lines of valuable source code and leverage the irreplaceable professional skills of the trusted staff while adding modern technologies and capabilities such as Java, SOA, Web Services, XML, and more.

Evolutionary approach to modernization

To reach this objective while avoiding a risky application rewrite, InfoTrax needed a partner who could deliver first on the technology requirements, and was willing to discuss the company's needs and find ways to meet them.

That's when InfoTrax contacted Veryant, which delivers isCOBOL APS, a software solution that protects and extends valuable application assets by blending the optimized, business-oriented nature of COBOL with the openness, portability, and power of the Java platform, without requiring businesses to retrain staff or rewrite code.

isCOBOL technology is highly compatible with today's common COBOL dialects and the Veryant development team is highly skilled in assisting customers with migrations from alternative platforms such as ACUCOBOL-GT.

"We really liked Veryant because their staff was very helpful in working with us as we made our decision," explained Mark Rawlins, InfoTrax CEO. "The product developers understood our former environment, so they could help us make informed and educated decisions about how to operate in isCOBOL."

There were several other key reasons for selecting Veryant, Rawlins continued. "isCOBOL could be deployed quickly with few source code changes." InfoTrax found isCOBOL to be approximately 98 percent compatible with ACUCOBOL-GT; this saved the company time and money. "In addition, isCOBOL provided a flexible Java-based solution and offered multi-language localization capabilities with its strong Unicode support.

A smooth transition

With approximately 800 online programs, 300 files, and 100 screens, InfoTrax's team of 15 application developers, assisted by the Veryant staff, transitioned the existing applications to isCOBOL. The company used several Veryant product modules, including the isCOBOL™ Compiler, isCOBOL™ Runtime Environment, isCOBOL™ Debugger, isCOBOL™ Server, and may implement others in the future. InfoTrax develops on Microsoft® Windows® and deploys using a Linux® server. End users access the sales support programs distributed across the network through Windows-based clients.

"I have always expected prompt help from my vendors and Veryant has exceeded that expectation time and time again," noted Jared Smith, lead developer on the project. "Veryant's developers have not only answered our questions, but they continue to show us how to best utilize isCOBOL to its full potential. Veryant is very willing to think outside the box with us and together we have built solutions that will push us to the forefront of the market."

A flexible future

The role of InfoTrax's development team was largely unaffected by the move to isCOBOL APS. Many of the company's developers wanted to learn Java and over time, InfoTrax will be moving basic application functions to the Java platform. With isCOBOL, InfoTrax has a flexible architecture for the future and the continuity that all of its application code compiles to Java.

"We know that with this transition, we will have more supportable software five years down the road," noted Rawlins. "The Veryant solution has given us improved cross-platform application portability, provided a very cost-effective solution with a fast time to value, and we find the performance is excellent."

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