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Ron Turley Associates moves to Veryant's isCOBOL Application Platform Suite
Fleet management software provider enhances COBOL assets with the power and portability of Java

"Moving to Veryant's isCOBOL technology opens new markets for us because of its pure Java deployment model and foreign language localization capabilities. It makes us competitive where we weren't before and helps expand our business."

- Larry Turley, President, RTA

Highlights

- Gained new features important to RTA customers, including enhanced GUI capabilities

- Preserved COBOL assets and added Java platform distribution capability

- Eliminated need to retrain current programmers or hire new staff

- Enhanced development efforts with the isCOBOL R&D Kit

- Opens new markets with foreign language localization capabilities

- Provides a reasonable path to Web-enabled software, improving RTA market position

Fleet management software keeps vehicles on the road

Ron Turley Associates (RTA) has been providing fleet management software to municipalities, school districts, trucking firms, transit authorities, airports, cargo shippers, and others for 25 years. RTA customers manage fleets ranging from 20 to 30,000 pieces of equipment. For these companies, fleet maintenance involves many variables: work orders, parts inventory, fueling, tire management, mechanic productivity, vendor performance, tool checkout, motor pool tracking, driver interface, and other issues.

RTA's fleet management software helps customers manage the complex job of tracking and maintaining their equipment in top shape, and insure driver safety and peak operating efficiency. The software also plays an important role in managing employee time and tasks, keeping inventory at optimum levels, and controlling costs. RTA customers face frequent employee turnover, so it is important to provide user-friendly software interfaces and high levels of training and support. Because RTA's software solution had been COBOL-based since inception, RTA needed a flexible and reliable COBOL option to continue delivering those benefits.

ACUCOBOL-GT solution fails to keep pace with customer needs

RTA had previously deployed its fleet management solution on ACUCOBOL-GT. However, the focus of new feature development for ACUCOBOL-GT had shifted in recent years to those that were not as valuable to RTA and its customers. Because RTA relied on regularly adding new features to meet customer requirements, the lack of recent innovation in ACUCOBOL-GT was starting to create a gap in RTA's offering when compared with competitors, and the company had to invest in additional programming to maintain a competitive product.

As that change occurred, RTA began to consider options, including the possibility of moving its COBOL applications to other platforms such as Java and C#. It was not an ideal solution; it would mean that RTA's long-time COBOL programmers would have to learn a completely new language or the company would have to replace them with other programmers with this knowledge.

"This wasn't the path that we wanted to pursue," explained Larry Turley, president of RTA. "It would be a costly and potentially difficult effort involving significant personnel changes that we didn't want to make. Our programmers have been with the company for years and pro**vide**

a valuable service; we didn't want to lose the contributions they make to the company every day."

As Turley considered which path to follow, Micro Focus acquired ACUCOBOL-GT. Then he knew he had to make a decision quickly. He didn't want to stay with ACUCOBOL-GT because it wasn't serving the company's needs and he was concerned about future support options. He didn't want to return to RM/COBOL, which RTA has used in the past, and pursuing a Java or C# option would be very disruptive to the company. So he searched for other COBOL options and discovered the isCOBOL Application Platform Suite (APS) from Veryant.

Veryant offers COBOL and Java together
Veryant's isCOBOL technology 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. RTA found the ability to retain COBOL as the basis for its software while simultaneously adding the capability of Java technology very enticing.

Following the decision to try isCOBOL APS, RTA quickly performed a preliminary trial conversion. Turley and two RTA programmers spent just one week learning the product and then completed a successful test. The trial convinced RTA that isCOBOL APS would work, was worth pursuing, and would be a good decision for the company.

Besides offering RTA the ability to preserve its COBOL assets while taking advantage of new Java technology, isCOBOL APS delivered several GUI features that were not available in ACU-COBOL-GT. In the area of Grid control, isCOBOL APS enabled RTA to drag and reorder columns, sort with or without keys, and sort on more than one column at a time – all by setting just one control property. Additional isCOBOL features allow RTA's software to prompt for data in various formats with field masking and embed HTML inside of literals to further improve user interfaces. RTA also plans to use isCOBOL APS' Java capability to create a Web-based solution that would provide a significant competitive edge for the company.

isCOBOL APS options offer RTA growth possibilities
isCOBOL APS offers another feature that was of interest to RTA: foreign language localization. The language resource feature provides an easy way to localize applications into multiple languages by configuring the text for user interfaces at run-

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- Larry Turley, President, RTA

time by selecting among different languages. This capability will further RTA's plans to expand internationally into South America and other new markets. Until now, RTA has sold internationally, but only with an English version of its software, which has limited the company's growth into other markets. A Spanish version of RTA's fleet management offering will open many new opportunities, with other languages to follow.

RTA selected several components of isCOBOL APS including the isCOBOL Compiler, isCOBOL ESQL Generator, and isCOBOL Server.

RTA was also looking for improved database performance; the company had struggled for some time with inadequate Microsoft SQL Server adapters. There are approximately 200 data files in RTA's applications, some quite large with gigabytes of data and millions of transactions in a single file. The company relies on both Oracle and MS SQL Server for its database options. RTA was using Vision files with ACUCOBOL-GT, but will move to Java Database Connectivity (JDBC) as the API with Oracle and SQL Server.

Some of RTA's smaller customers access their COBOL programs through Windows on a local area network (LAN) and large clients with more than 300 users rely on Citrix clusters and thin client mode. Smaller customers will still be able to provide LAN access to applications with isCOBOL APS. Customers using ACUCOBOL-GT Thin Client will migrate to the pure Java thin client offering in isCOBOL Server.

isCOBOL ISV Program further accelerates development
As an independent software vendor (ISV), RTA also signed up for Veryant's isCOBOL ISV Program. By joining, Turley was

able to provide his development team with the isCOBOL R&D Kit at a nominal fee. The isCOBOL R&D Kit contains full sets of isCOBOL APS – including all development tools and related technologies such as isCOBOL Web Direct. This technology will play a key role as RTA develops its Web-based solution down the road. At no extra cost, RTA's developers have at their disposal the full potential of isCOBOL APS for further modern-ization work and product demonstrations to prospects and clients.

Turley is pleased with the growth possibilities isCOBOL APS creates for his company over the next few years. Now RTA will be able to retain its valuable COBOL programs and not venture into a risky, costly platform change. Veryant's software will open up new markets, and contribute to improved perfor-mance, a key benefit for customers.

Turley is quite satisfied with the responsiveness from Veryant, which he described as prompt and effective. "I would definite-ly give Veryant a thumbs up."