Distinctly

More Clarity

A structured representation of system information:

HDI-Gerling stores their cross-platform data in an easily accessible XINFO repository. The relevant information, collected from Oracle-DB, UNIX/SAP, IBM Host (z/OS), and Microsoft Windows, is readily available for management, various departments, application developers and IT.

Initial Situation

Similar to many other fast-growing IT environments, the hardware landscape included an IBM mainframe, as well as de-centralized processing under Windows, UNIX and SAP. The various platforms, and their respective applications, are connected via interfaces, and information is exchanged between systems. The application developers and IT personnel lack a method to analyze data across platforms. An existing repository is available but it can't keep up with the growing demands.

"XINFO – our central repository for cross-platform impact analysis, organization, process and development information."
Wolfram Guendisch
HDI-Gerling Leben Betriebsservice GmbH,
Application Technology

Vision

The new repository should not only fulfill the current requirements, it should also be flexible and easily expand to integrate tomorrow's new data and information: "Simple administration, fast and easy expansion, integration of new products and data, expandable to include new interfaces, perform impact analysis, integrate with other Office products, and accessible via a web browser." These were the features that – according to Wolfram Guendisch – should naturally be included in a new repository.

Solution

After a thorough market analysis of all of the established repository vendors, HDI-Gerling chose the standard software package XINFO[1] from HORIZONT GmbH[2]. Besides the small footprint, one of the main reasons for the decision was the number of criteria that the product could fulfill – by far the highest number of all vendors – which was determined after a two week proof of concept. Guendisch also points to the excellent co-operation and support from HORIZONT during the installation and implementation phase.

The final solution in detail: According to HDI-Gerling's individual requirements, the relevant data is collected from the different platforms by analysis programs (so-called "scanners"). This data includes UNIX/SAP (equipment data), Oracle DB Systems, Windows XP (SCM, Java) and z/OS (TWS, JCL, DB2, Endevor, COBOL, SMF and space). HDI-Gerling specific information regarding their internal organization structure is added. This raw data is processed in a second step by the XINFO programs and loaded into an XINFO DB2 z/OS database. This process is repeated on a regular basis so the XINFO users always have current information available. "Happily, the repository can easily be expanded," remarks Guendisch. "With very little effort, we were able to integrate a Java Class scanner, Problem Management and File Transfer information." The end users at HDI-Gerling use a home-grown web

[1] *XINFO is known in North America as SmartIS.*

[2] *The HORIZONT products are distributed in North America by SEGUS Inc.*

interface to access XINFO. In this way, pre-defined questions can be submitted by the browser to XINFO and the results are also displayed in the browser. It should be noted that XINFO does not change any of the original data in the scanned systems. Similarly, the users can not change the data, as it is only accessed in a browse mode. The query results can also be exported to an Excel table, using the report wizard.

Now there is a lot more clarity and transparency. The simple management, the analysis of current data at any stage of the application development, and the graphical interpretation of parts of the data all make XINFO, according to Guendisch, into an "important tool for the different departments."

Benefits

"What used to be troublesome and only possible with a lot of effort, can now be done in a clear way at the touch of a button." This is how Guendisch sees things today. The target user group for XINFO is varied. Production monitoring can be conducted across platforms and resources, and all relevant systems and processes can be observed and analyzed. Management has the ability to obtain targeted information themselves. Perhaps the largest benefit, though, is for the application developers and data center managers. Now it is possible to clearly determine and show dependencies and interactions between databases, files, JCL and processes. For instance, using a program name, it is possible to immediately list the files used, the database updates involved, and the dependencies upon other applications. All of this in either table form or as a graphic. Guendisch sums the experience up: "What used to be a black box, is now transparent and comprehensible."

Summary

Benefits

Very short implementation time. Easy-to-use repository for analysis and reporting. High acceptance rate. Easy to integrate new data. Easy to integrate into existing IT structures.

Total Project Time

Around 13 months to create the list of requirements, conduct market analysis, (including visits to reference sites), install and test, and reach a conclusion. The base installation for the proof of concept took two weeks.

Technical Environment

XINFO with DB2 z/OS, Web interface for XINFO access. Data from z/OS, UNIX, Windows, SAP and Oracle in XINFO.

Special Considerations

Development of a proprietary web application as an alternative method for accessing XINFO. Integration of SCM-toolswith stage concept across several development and test environments prior to Production. Expansion of the scanners for decentralized environments.

HDI-Gerling

Since October 2006, HDI-Gerling has been a brand name active in the insurance market. At that time, the life insurers HDI and Gerling merged to become HDI-Gerling Lebensversicherung AG. Together with ASPECTA, they now form the HDI-Gerling Leben Group.

HDI-Gerling - a leading industrial insurer – provides expertise for company retirement plans, technical safety advice and private insurance. In fiscal 2008, HDI-Gerling Leben Group – including their foreign interests - grossed 2.9 Billion Euros (Milliarden). The gross premiums of HDI-Gerling property insurance in 2009 were around 5 Billion (Milliarden) Euros.

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