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Engineering ingenuity: good price, outstanding software - KVBW, a German state agency, bets its mission critical applications' future on innoWake's automated COBOL and Natural migration solutions

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Whether an IT- system is future proof is not purely dependent on its ability to solely perform business functionality. For ERP systems and Internet based applications an intuitive UI, ease of use, and the ability to flexibly adapt to changing processes are equally important. Kommunaler Versorgungsverband Baden-Württemberg (KVBW), a large German state agency is well aware and has decided to modernize its COBOL and Natural based IT environment. From the mainframe based development tools and processes to the application itself, KVBW is moving to a modern, multi-tiered architecture with intuitive application front ends. The tool of choice is innoWake's tightly integrated modernisation solutions. The high degree of automation achievable in the project guarantees top-of-class value compared to other methods. Mature business processes for minimal cost is KVBW's mantra for creating and delivering, among others, retirement systems (BV), ZV (Zusatzversorgung), and Beihilfe (retirement support). In addition to its own users, KVBW supports 9 other retirement systems across Germany. A total of 600 users work with the mainframe application written in COBOL and Natural/Adabas. The business functionality has been solid for many years. However, the system's front end has been showing its age increasingly. "Text based maps typical for mainframe applications are ready to go. Our own users as well as external ones have been yearning for graphical UIs," remembers Horst Utzni, IT Director at KVBW. Added pressure comes from e-Government initiatives. Automating business processes in the web was impossible using the traditional 2-tier architecture. Current software fundamentals and user interfaces coupled with the maximum functionality and process flexibility – that is what the team around Oliver Fuchs, Project Manager for ZUSA and Application Development Director at KVBW were asking for. The options were to either modernize the existing IT application, using an off-the-shelf solution, or implementing a related external application. The decision to modernize the COBOL and Natural based mainframe application required the following criteria to be met in an RFP: an integrated Eclipse based platform for future development, introduction of a service-oriented multi-tier architecture (SOA) for future IT strategies and e-Government requirements as well as moving the old text based maps to a user friendly interface. innoWake was the chosen solution. "On top of innoWake covering all requirements beautifully, the solution was also what was viable from a business point of view. It was a fraction of the cost of introducing new business processes", Oliver Fuchs explains. The first phase was focused on modernizing the development environment and process. Based on the open source framework Eclipse, innoWake's solutions maxenso cobolclipse and maxenso natclipse now

PRESS RELEASE

provide a homogeneous, cross-language platform for Natural, COBOL, and Java development. “Simplifying and unifying these worlds improves quality and efficiency across the board”, says Oliver Fuchs. Integration with innoWake configuration management solution lifecycle-manager makes cross-language development with Natural, COBOL, and Java even more seamless. Using Subversion for version control, the full range of its history and synchronization features are available for all languages. “This is pure gold for the auditors. We can prove when and where changes were done to applications at any time”, explains Horst Utzni. Deployment through the development stages is now fully automated and sources of error are completely removed. The second phase was application modernisation. Modern user interfaces deliver the right information in the right way at the best time where it is needed supporting internal and external processes optimally. The users’ workflow is supported by intuitively usable screens increasing productivity and reducing time spent on training. “As we were seeing this unfold, our appetite for more became apparent. At the end of the day we were able to achieve even more than initially assumed”, says Horst Utzni. After the business users optimized the front ends, the legacy application was migrated to service oriented architecture (SOA). The front end calls services in the backend as required by process flow. This leaves the user to determine process flow without being bound by the application logic. “With SOA we can now flexibly adapt our business process and integrate with external systems easily”, says Oliver Fuchs. Modernisation also has a positive impact on the IT process’s quality and maintainability. Front ends and database access can be generated automatically – even testing is part of the program. “Such a project’s success is measured by 2 factors: the best modernisation practice and increased productivity operationally. Thanks to innoWake’s solution we have been successful in both areas. It combines cost effectiveness, quality, and is future proof”, are Horst Utzni’s final conclusion. Thanks to the sophisticated modernisation project, KVBW now fulfills its requirements for an agile IT and secures its future with the current IT landscape. Customer requirements can now be met in spite of the complex infrastructure through model driven development in a timely and cost efficient matter.

About KVBW

KVBW is a German state agency with approximately 500 employees. It is based in Karlsruhe, Germany. KVBW’s tasks are to provide retirement payments according to the laws for civil servants, providing support for child birth, illness, disability, and death. The business area “Communal Employee Service” (KPS) provides all payroll services. In addition it provides child support for the State of Baden-Württemberg. KVBW has the additional retirement fund ZKV attached as a non-independent unit. ZKV provides its members’ employees retirement payments. It also provides certain additional

PRESS RELEASE

retirement benefits (Riesterrente) that German retirement law postulates.

About innoWake

innowake gmbh has been offering innovative, effective and flexible solutions for the modernisation of applications and development environments for more than eleven years. Addressing problems in existing applications, innowake resolves them with a unique “soft” modernisation approach. innowake also offers highly automated methods to migrate Natural, Cobol and other applications to Java. The software firm effectively combines expertise in Java, Natural, COBOL and PL/1. innowake is headquartered in Senden near Ulm, Germany and currently has approximately 50 employees. The executive consists of Thorsten Bernecker, Björn Langmack and Mirko Schliemann. The subsidiary innowake international inc. is based in sunny San Francisco, CA.

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For more information: You can find the press release also on www.innowake.com

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