

BY BEN HARRIS AND GLENN PALMIERE

Florida Department of Children and Families Makes Rapid Integration a Reality

All too often, the typical view of government projects is that they take too long, cost too much and don't deliver results. Not so at the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), where a three-person team initiated an integration project that went from concept through development and testing to Web deployment in just 90 days.

Our vision was to integrate the information from 59 disparate applications running on multiple platforms and accessing a variety of databases into a composite portal application that provides a single view of relevant data about each DCF client. The result of making that vision a reality is OneFamily, a Web portal built on InterSystems Corporation's Ensemble integration platform and utilizing iWay data adapters.

DCF is the one of the largest agencies in Florida, serving a statewide population with a variety of programs designed to provide care and support for Florida's most vulnerable citizens. Numbering in the millions, this population includes abused and neglected children, the elderly and disabled, and those who are physically and mentally challenged or substance dependent.

As a government agency, DCF is confronted by integration challenges that are as significant as they are inevitable. Agency programs are created as the direct result of legislation that typically sets very specific, tight deadlines for when the programs must be implemented. The result is that speed is the critical success factor for developing and deploying the IT applications that enable the programs, leaving little or no time for long-term planning about the impact on system infrastructure.

Not surprisingly, therefore, DCF applications are running on platforms ranging from IBM mainframes to PCs. Data repositories include Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, InterSystems' CACHÉ, IMS, DB2, Access and Visual FoxPro. That means service providers and caseworkers had no way to tie together all of the information that is key to making appropriate decisions about how to best serve any individual client. The impact of this lack of a single view of all client data could be costly and frustrating, resulting in

unnecessary duplication of services or failure to deliver all of the services to which a client is entitled. It could also result in tragedy, illustrated by the case of Rilya Wilson, a 4-year-old placed with her grandmother by DCF. Wilson was abducted in 2001, and it was nearly 16 months before DCF was aware of what happened.

DCF opted to become an early adopter of Ensemble, which offers a complete range of iWay data adapters, and kicked off a development and deployment initiative in 2Q03. The development team created a test bed integrating information from five systems. The composite application was rapidly prototyped and, after a series of reviews that included a presentation to Governor Jeb Bush, went live just 90 days after project initiation.

Ensemble uniquely offers the rapid, comprehensive solution we needed to integrate information and applications,

InterSystems'
Ensemble Plus
iWay Adapters
Enable
Composite
Web
Application
Rollout
in 90 Days



create reports across our 59 systems and leverage new technologies that could easily combine legacy information with new screens. And, iWay's Intelligent Adapter for IMS provides persistent, real-time ODBC connectivity to a legacy hierarchical database that contains all of DCF's client eligibility information. This information, which is stored in the largest IMS database in the world, is critical to every service DCF provides. With the adapter, the data can be accessed through the application, data or web services data exchange layer of OneFamily and incorporated in

all 59 applications for seamless eligibility determination.

The single view of client data that Ensemble has made possible will enable DCF to take an holistic approach to care for our clients. Additionally, the combination of Ensemble and iWay adapters is delivering concrete returns on DCF's technology investment. With about 80 percent of needed information already existing in DCF's legacy systems, the cost to rewrite all 59 systems would run to millions of dollars. By integrating legacy data with new screens accessed by an Ensemble-based composite application, DCF will save more

than 90 percent of that potential cost. Based on the results of the pilot, DCF is moving forward with an extremely aggressive deployment strategy to integrate the remaining applications under the OneFamily umbrella.

So, what began as an integration project has become an enterprise information architecture. It's a success for DCF and, more important, the clients whom we serve. 🌐

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INTERVIEW WITH INTERSYSTEMS'

TREVOR MATZ

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF ENTERPRISE
APPLICATION INTEGRATION

IB MAGAZINE - InterSystems' recently launched Ensemble integration platform is said to enable universal business integration (UBI). How does UBI differ from other integration approaches?

MATZ - The goal of universal business integration is to enable business and IT managers to implement a "leave and layer" architecture that dramatically cuts the costs associated with building comprehensive "business fusion" integration solutions.

The attempt to create fusion between IT assets and business needs has been the driving force behind the latest generation of development architectures, database, integration, application and portal servers, workflow, business process modeling and automation tools, and business intelligence solutions. While these technologies and integration approaches have all provided some relief, the goal of a comprehensive platform incorporating the functionality of these technologies in a single, consistently architected product, has been elusive.

The universal business integration (UBI) platform is based on a new, innovative architecture that fuses these previously autonomous technologies in a single product.

Recognizing that rapid and flexible business integration solutions are driven by metadata definitions representing all the integration touch points, and transactional-messages that represent the data flow between these loosely coupled autonomous systems, the UBIP places the data management tier, with its single, shared metadata repository and ultra-scalable transactional message warehouse, at the core of its architecture. The result: unified architecture, development and management across all four tiers of the integration platform stack—the data server, integration server, application server and portal.

It is this unique technology fusion that supports the broadest set of integration initiatives and delivers on the promise of extremely fast information and application integration, as well as rapid composite application development.

IB MAGAZINE - How does Ensemble enable UBI?

MATZ - Ensemble fuses Application Integration (EAI) with Information Integration (EII) and unites SOA architectures with event-driven architectures, real-time business intelligence with business process orchestration, long-running business



processes with real-time composite applications, data management with application development, message warehousing with message tracing, relational technology with object technology and Web Services—using a single data/logic model, development and management environment across all four tiers.

IB MAGAZINE - How does iWay Software mesh with InterSystems' vision of UBI?

MATZ - As the leading provider of adapters in the industry, iWay has the expertise and deep understanding of the issues surrounding complex integration project requirements to make its adapters a key component of our UBI vision. We have partnered with iWay to fuse the iWay adapter framework with Ensemble to provide the most efficient mechanism for seamlessly integrating our two technologies from a development, metadata management, and system management perspective—a key UBI goal. 🌐