

Swiss Life / Rentenanstalt

MitemView integrates multiple legacy applications into SilverStream's eXtend Application Server

Industry Insurance

About Swiss Life

Swiss Life/Rentenanstalt was founded in Zurich in 1857 and has been a public limited company since 1997. It is the oldest life assurance company in Switzerland and a clear number one in the domestic market. At the same time, it is one of the leading financial service providers in Europe in the field of provident funds and security. In addition to providing insurance solutions and services, Swiss Life also has a strong presence in the area of third party asset management.

Swiss Life employs approximately 2,500 office staff in Switzerland. There are, in addition, around 800 provident fund advisers distributed throughout the country at 72 general agencies, ensuring that customers receive comprehensive care in the field of provident funds and security. Swiss Life has approximately 12,000 employees worldwide and is represented by subsidiaries, branch offices and agents in around 50 countries.

Background

An incentive was undertaken at the beginning of 2000 to further optimize the provision of customer service through one of Swiss Life's divisions in the private insurance sector. The "Service Centre" project came about as a result of this incentive and the Centre has now been fully operational since August 2001, fulfilling a strategic pilot function for other corporate divisions, the long-term plan to transfer this Service Centre model to other divisions of the company.

Swiss Life, a market leader in the life assurance sector in Switzerland, is leading the way in the Swiss insurance market with its unique "Service Centre" concept, and is

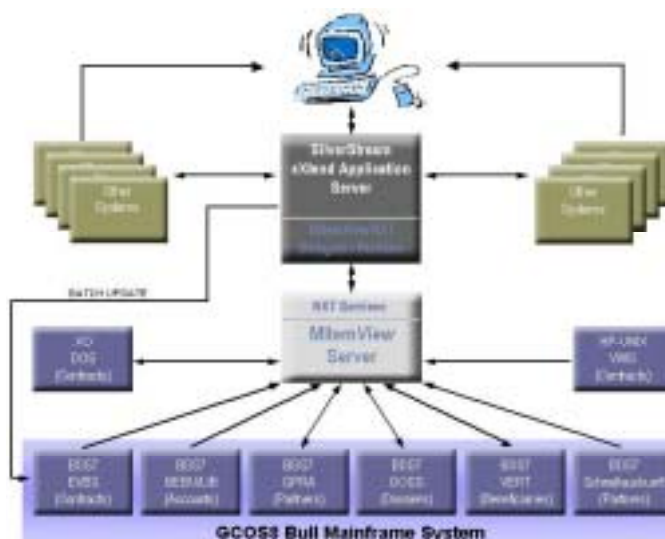
"This tour de force has created all the prerequisites necessary for an optimal level of service to all our customers".

Fritz Müller
Head of the Customer Service Center
Swiss Life/Rentenanstalt

striving to achieve a standard in terms of customer satisfaction that is clearly distinct from other

providers. Fritz Müller, head of the Customer Service Center comments enthusiastically that for him a long-term wish has been fulfilled with the advent of this project. "This tour de force has created all the prerequisites necessary for an optimal level of service to all our customers", he says.

Anyone who now contacts Swiss Life will be serviced by a member of staff who has the necessary client and policy information immediately to hand. They are now able to concentrate on the customer, rather than on gathering information. The biggest challenge that arose in supporting the new structure was the creation of a uniform technical infrastructure. Ingenious information technology systems and well thought out processes now enable customer requirements to be processed both competently and rapidly. To achieve this, several complex tasks had to be solved in ten partial projects and then coordinated and integrated into the overall project. The main focus centered on the development of PIT Private, the "Professional Insurance Tool" for private insurance.



In explaining the advantages, Karin Simon, head of the Service Centre project at Swiss Life stated that, "By utilizing this new standard user interface for all Service Centre employees, we are able to map specific information from ten different systems and process policy adjustments in a single application. In addition, we have integrated modern service functions into the system and, as a result, everyone is a winner: our employees through having a much more convenient system to operate when dealing with customers and our customers through a quicker and more efficient level of service."

TietoEnator Consulting was appointed as Systems Integrator and was to a large extent responsible at the Service Centre for implementing and further developing PIT Private, which encompassed portal management, reporting and most importantly, back office system and application integration.

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Integration Software

Better Customer Service Through Back and Front Office Integration

"By utilizing this new standard user interface for all Service Centre employees, we are able to map specific information from ten different systems and process policy adjustments in a single application..."

Karin Simon
Head of the Service
Centre project
Swiss Life

Customer information and policy data were administered at Swiss Life on the most diverse IT systems and databases, none of which were integrated with each other. As a result, customer relationship management was considerably impaired through complex processes and workflows as well as extremely long familiarization periods for new employees. Customer service agents had to learn different screen modes, frequently open several terminal sessions concurrently and had the arduous task of navigating torturous screens and menus, in order to respond to customer requirements.



In order to improve customer relationship management, data had to be combined into one user interface; this marked the advent of PIT Private. Swiss Life and TietoEnator decided to develop the front-end application as a Java client running on the SilverStream application server platform. The design of the graphical user interface, with which specific host data from different systems was to be displayed, was also jointly specified. MitemView and Tuxedo-Services were selected to provide host integration.

Now, all necessary existing systems for private insurance have been integrated into the uniform front-end in such a way that policy information from ten different sources can be viewed and processed under one standard graphical user interface.

Multiple Integration Points – Stepping up to the Challenge

Swiss Life use a number of different host applications running on diverse systems such as a Bull mainframe, HP UNIX and an Intel-based DOS. The Bull mainframe hosts the majority of the key applications. BEA Tuxedo has long been Swiss

Life's strategy for middleware, however, it is broadly recognized that to achieve this goal one must wait a considerable amount of time whilst the invasive services are created and implemented. Swiss Life needed to realize improvements immediately and chose MitemView to bridge the gap. MitemView was used to create services that hadn't already been created using Tuxedo and to replicate some Tuxedo services where Tuxedo was unable to interface with the SilverStream Application Server, until a suitable bridge was configured using BEA Jolt.

Taking the Load

The architectural design dictated that all host transactions (with exception to the DOS based XO system) be monitored with tracking and audit trail capabilities. Users of PIT Private would therefore have their login details passed through to the host systems using MitemView so that all host user interactions could be audited. What this actually means is that at peak times – with 150 Service Centre Agents logged-on – the MitemView Server would be required to process up to 900 transactions concurrently. Only MitemView's event-driven framework would permit this without affecting the performance or reliability of the host systems.

Allowing applications to collaborate

A pilot was conducted in February 2001 to show how MitemView would work in conjunction with an Application Server; the HTTP protocol was used between the Servers, and provided an adequate connection method. However, for the actual project a decision was made to use MITEM's NXTier interface technology. The advantage was that simply by utilizing the existing infrastructure – in the same way that MitemView communicates with host systems – two servers are able to talk via messages. This approach provides a simple and known method of communication for a MitemView developer.



MITEM's NXTier (NXT) enables a collaborative relationship to be formed between a MitemView Server and an

independent application running on a remote system – in this case, the SilverStream Application Server. An NXT interface consists of an NXT delegate that uses an NXT runtime to form a collaboration with a MitemView Server that has NXT services enabled.

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