



The new face of COBOL®

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Columbia Steel and Acucorp Forge a New Solution

"Portability is an important thing for us. We don't plan to move our applications to another platform, but it's nice to know we can with Acucorp."

—Rex Dickey, IT Director, Columbia Steel Casting Co., Inc.

Columbia Steel Fast Facts:

- Founded in 1901
- Headquarters in Portland, Oregon
- Approximately 400 employees
- Annual revenue between US \$50-100 million
- Manufactures custom parts from 4 to 40,000 lbs
- www.columbiasteel.com

Industry:

- Manufacturing

Application:

- Accounting, purchasing, order processing, sales quotations, and manufacturing schedules

Business Need:

- Platform conversion

New Environment:

- HP 9000 with HP-UX
- MPUX™ (MPE emulation subsystem)
- Eloquence® database
- Windows development workstations
- ACUCOBOL-GT®

Previous Environment:

- HP e3000 with MPE
- Image database
- HP COBOL II

Business Issue

Columbia Steel Casting Co. has been manufacturing wear-resistant steel and iron alloy replacement parts for heavy industry for more than a hundred years. For over twenty years, it has used an in-house application running on HP e3000 for all of its business processing. IT Director, Rex Dickey, says, "It meets our needs very well. There is a competitive advantage in having software that works the way we need it to. It's not something we could run out and buy in an off-the-shelf package." When HP announced the end-of-life for the HP e3000 platform, Columbia Steel chose to transition its application to a new platform.

Solution

Dickey spent two years researching options. Ultimately, Ordina Denkart's MPUX emulator and Marxmeier Software's Eloquence database were his top choices. MPUX allows Columbia to run its existing applications on an HP-UX platform, minimizing the cost and risk of the migration. The only COBOL that fulfilled Columbia's business objectives on MPUX was ACUCOBOL-GT. As Dickey says, "The other COBOL compilers were nowhere near ready for prime time. ACUCOBOL-GT was just amazing! The source code we brought across compiled effortlessly." Dickey continues, "ACUCOBOL-GT has excellent compatibility with HP-COBOL. We didn't have to modify the code to get it to compile. When ACUCOBOL-GT called an HP intrinsic that was really an MPUX-emulated intrinsic it just worked."

Dickey, assisted by Consultant Craig Lalley of Echo Tech, spent four months migrating 120 program modules, the first third of Columbia Steel's application. Most of that time was devoted to in-depth testing of the emulated code. The project went live on the target completion date. During the second phase of migration, it took Dickey and Lalley only half a day to convert and compile over 400 programs.

Acucorp's technical staff was able to step in whenever there was a problem. Dickey reports, "They moved mountains for us, particularly after we started user testing and were running tight on time." He adds, "All three companies worked as a team. I could report a problem to Acucorp and get a fix back from Ordina Denkart. That's fantastic!"

Benefits

When researching its migration project, Columbia Steel received estimates far beyond its available budget. Only Acucorp offered a solution that fit both its needs and its budget. Because Acucorp's solution worked with MPUX terminal emulation, everything looks exactly the same, and no employee retraining costs were incurred. Reports run 10-15 times faster on the new system, adding a dramatic increase in worker productivity.

Future Plans

Columbia Steel expects to have its entire application live by the end of 2004—on time and within budget. After that, Dickey is considering a new graphical user interface for administrative applications.

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