

A Large Bank Converts Oracle Forms to Java with Exodus



Customer Overview

The customer is a large commercial bank (“the Bank”) in the United States with more than 2,800 banking offices and 5,000 ATMs. The Bank provides a comprehensive line of banking, brokerage, insurance, investment, mortgage, trust and payment services products to consumers, businesses and institutions.

Challenge

The Bank purchased a company with several Oracle Forms based applications and more than 250 Forms. Business requirements dictated moving the applications to the Java platform so they could integrate with other Java applications within the larger organization.

The Bank reviewed the options for converting these Oracle Forms applications to Java. Their goal was to find an efficient and effective way to move these applications into the J2EE environment with minimal disruption to the application’s users. Additionally, they were looking to save time and money getting the applications to Java, while also retaining the legacy investments already made in the Oracle Forms environment.

The Bank did not have expertise in the Oracle Forms environment and its technological capabilities and strategic technology direction did not include Oracle Forms. They faced the challenge to move the applications to Java, minimize the disruption of service for its customers and achieve an aggressive migration timeline.

They evaluated different options including, a complete re-write of each application to simply converting the data without the business logic, UI layers of the applications. However, these options were not as attractive due to timelines and the requirement for little to no disruption time for the customer. The costs included with customers learning a new system were not reasonable.

They initiated a methodology for moving the applications to Java, including:

- Identify software direction for the applications
- Work with vendors to explore the various vendor-driven options
- Evaluate the different options
- Perform analysis on the different options
- Determine a suitable solution

One of the biggest challenges for the Bank was its lack of domain knowledge about the Forms applications. Therefore, they required a solution that would provide like-for-like conversion of applications, including the business logic, User Interface and data without involving the subject matter experts.

Solution

The Bank selected Unify | CipherSoft’s Exodus conversion tool, and contracted with the Exodus migration team to do the actual conversion work. With their team of Java developers, they needed to get the acquired Oracle Forms applications to a platform where the team could easily maintain and enhance the applications going forward.

Exodus, which converts Oracle Forms to 100% Java code, not only saved the Bank time, but maintained the business logic of the original applications, which was a critical requirement.

If the alternative approach to rewrite the application had been undertaken, all of the business requirements would need to be recreated and redeveloped – creating a long and complex process. The Exodus automated conversion tool provided a similar look and feel and, therefore no new learning curve for the users. Following the conversion, the entire application ran in the Java environment, and the data integrity was maintained in the existing Oracle database.

Also the converted applications, once moved to production, were completely maintainable by bank personnel. Exodus has no proprietary code and no perpetual licensing. Having maintainable code also allowed them the opportunity to extend and optimize the applications, giving their users added functionality.

CASE STUDY:

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Why Unify | CipherSoft Won?

Unify | CipherSoft is the only company with a tool to convert upwards of 95% of the original Forms application, including all of the business logic, as well as the user presentation layer and the data access. Exodus provides the choice to have the same look and feel of the original application, or to define a new GUI for the application. Any time an automated tool can be used, it reduces risk and testing time, as an automated converter always produces the same results. Therefore, once a common routine is generated and tested, the results of that routine will be consistent throughout the application.

Additionally, Unify | CipherSoft offered a fixed price solution, and had the expertise on staff to both do the project, support knowledge transfer to bank personnel as they learned the new application, and had resources available for additional customization of the product and migrated application.

Results

By utilizing Unify | CipherSoft's expertise along with the Exodus conversion technology, the Bank was able to have all its Oracle Forms applications migrated to Java cleanly and quickly while minimizing risk and dramatically reducing the application's time to production. The largest benefit seen from the customer was the ability to convert the code using a black-box approach for the conversion.

Coordination and communication were essential between the development teams for the Bank and Unify | CipherSoft. Both sides appointed project managers to be central points of contact, and regular status meetings were performed. Live interactive Internet sessions were scheduled to show and discuss issues, allowing both teams to see what the other party saw. Also, detailed testing issue templates were used and updated for each application. Testers entered details of the problems encountered so that CipherSoft developers could easily duplicate the problems, resulting in quicker resolutions.

During the course of the project, the Bank ran into several unsupported Oracle functions, and/or uses of built-in functions. In every case, the functionality was evaluated and based on the occurrences and necessity, was built into the product and the application. Some of the key issues encountered and implemented were Key Mapping and Hot Key usage, new properties added to components to allow developers to tweak performance on pages used for heavy data entry, and configurable parameters for buffering data for LOVs and table entries.

Exodus converted Java code was not based on the same server-base as the client's platform. Through the appointed contacts, issues stemming from this discrepancy were resolved in a timely manner.

The Bank performed extensive performance and load balancing testing before moving the converted applications into production. All issues were resolved through the combined efforts of on-site bank personnel and the Unify | CipherSoft team prior to going into production, thus giving the client a high degree of confidence on the "go-live" dates. Once the applications were up in production, feedback was extremely positive – with very smooth transition.

The Bank achieved its project metrics to eliminate the Oracle Forms applications, and transition the applications to the Java platform on time and within budget. With the CipherSoft Exodus product and team, this was achieved. The core business functionality remains the same, and users are easily able to use the new Java applications without a learning curve.

According to the Development Manager at the Bank, "Using Unify | CipherSoft, we were able to accurately convert and efficiently migrate our legacy applications. We were able to meet our timelines and provide an application that is positioned for future growth."

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