



RealDanmark makes real gains with VisualAge Generator

Industry

Banking, Finance & Securities

Application

Customer Information Management

Software

VisualAge® Generator (Version 4.0)
VisualAge for Java (Version 3.0)
VA Assist Enterprise/G
CICS®
OS/390®
Windows NT

Solution

Customer Care

Some application development technologies are worth their weight in gold. Just ask RealDanmark, one of Denmark's largest banks. In a series of simple steps, the bank has moved from 3270 emulation right through to Web-enabled computing, all the while protecting its legacy COBOL and VisualAge Generator investments.

How has it enabled this smooth migration and increased developer productivity? By using IBM VisualAge Generator (VAG), VisualAge for Java (VAJ) and, for an extra boost, VA Assist Enterprise, from IBM Business Partner Instantiations.

"Our mission-critical applications are mostly based on IBM System/390 enterprise systems," says Jesper Hollitsch Poulsen, Projectleader for VAJ and VAG development. "In the mid 1990s, in order to give our users simpler, more intuitive

graphical interfaces, we started migrating these applications from CSP to VisualAge Generator. Our next step was to enable universal Web browser access using VisualAge for Java. The IBM VisualAge family of products are helping us make a smooth transition while meeting or exceeding all our technology and business objectives."

The bank's objectives included:

- Leverage the investment in VisualAge Generator to make the transition to Java and Web technologies;
- Rapidly develop new Web interfaces to the bank's enterprise systems;
- Avoid the time-consuming, complex task of manually coding the Java-to-mainframe interfaces;
- Smoothly complement traditional host developer skills (COBOL, VAG) with Web and Java technologies



"We chose to make browser-based solutions using applets so that we could more easily distribute our VisualAge for Java GUI's to our 6,000 end users," explains Poulsen. "Normally, we distribute software centrally. As long as their systems are turned on, there's no problem. But, we found approximately 10 percent missed the updates each time. We can eliminate this problem by using applets on the server. The right version will automatically be loaded onto the client. That's a very important benefit from both an I/T and business point of view."

VisualAge integrated development environment shortens time to market

For its first Web-based application, bank developers used VisualAge for Java (Version 2.0) to build a small intranet application, which provides customer information to approximately 400 end users. Developers have since completed eight more similar applications and approximately 20 applets. And, they have migrated to VisualAge for Java Version 3.0 and VisualAge Generator 4.0.

"We began using VisualAge for Java to build the applets," says Poulsen. "In this way, with some knowledge of Java, our enterprise developers were able to leverage our CICS legacy applications. We also use the Java wrapper functionality from VisualAge Generator to connect the Java applets to the System/390. The combination of a Java front end and a CICS® back-end gives us a user-friendly Web interface while retaining the transactional robustness we need to support our operations."

After good experiences with VisualAge for Java and VisualAge Generator, RealDanmark is now moving to VisualAge Generator 4.0, which combines the two environments. With its built-in Java support, VisualAge Generator provides an end-to-end test environment. Using the Integrated Test Facility, bank developers can debug and test in the same environment for both the Java GUI and the server side application. They can also remotely access COBOL/CICS load modules running on OS/390 from the VisualAge Generator development environment.

"VisualAge Generator's Integrated Test Facility is super," says Poulsen. "It will shorten the development cycle significantly for RealDanmark. Currently, it could take developers up to 30 minutes to debug a program. With the new VisualAge Generator, it will take just a few minutes."

VA Assist Enterprise boosts developer productivity

The bank plans to fully migrate to VisualAge Generator 4.0 in July 2000. When the transition is complete, the bank will have moved more than 5,000 VisualAge Generator applications to this development environment with relative ease. Step two in the migration process will be to migrate another 5,000 CSP 4.1 programs to VisualAge Generator 4.0 in October 2000, while educating another 50 developers to work in this environment.

Meanwhile, RealDanmark has found another breakthrough tool to boost developer productivity: VA Assist Enterprise, from IBM Business Partner Instantiations, based in Tualatin, Oregon. VA Assist Enterprise is a family of powerful add-on products that integrate seamlessly into the VisualAge development environments. Instantiations developed a version of the product specifically for VisualAge Generator 4.0. It's this version that RealDanmark developers have begun to use.

The result, according to Poulsen, have been outstanding. "For a small investment, we're experiencing huge benefits," he says. "We're very happy with the product. We will soon have all our VisualAge Generator developers using it. We especially like the way it provides added flexibility with the ENVY version control features. We clearly see the benefit in the way it VA Assist Enterprise accelerates our time-to-delivery, which translates directly into cost savings for us."

"I believe the new VisualAge Generator and VisualAge Java will play a central role in RealDanmark's future development efforts, combined with VA Assist Enterprise," he adds. "Our goal is to give our application developers efficient tools for developing intranet and Internet solutions. We believe we can very successfully achieve this goal with these VisualAge tools."

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