



business partner



The new face of COBOL®

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L'ORÉAL Mexico's HP e3000 Gets a Makeover

"Acucorp's innovative technologies and responsive customer service have changed our business forever," explains Jesús Solórzano, IT Manager for L'Oréal Mexico. "We're not only saving money; we're also able to keep our application and open it up to a whole new set of technologies."

L'Oréal Mexico Fast Facts:

- L'Oréal subsidiary opened in 1962
- Manufacturing facility in Xochimilco, Mexico produces about 130 million units of hair care and skin care products for distribution in Mexico and Central and South America each year
- The subsidiary has approximately 1,400 employees; over 200 are employed at the plant

Application:

- Custom industrial processing, production, planning, warehousing, distribution, quality control, and administrative accounting application

Acucorp Solutions:

- HP e3000 conversion
- Access to Microsoft SQL Server
- Enhanced programmer productivity

New Environment:

- HP ProLiant DL740 server with Microsoft Windows 2000 Advanced Server

Previous Environment:

- HP e3000

Previous COBOL:

- HP COBOL II

Acucorp, Inc. 1-800-262-6585

or +1-858-689-4500 info@acucorp.com

Acucorp Benelux B.V. +31 (0) 73 623 02 09

Acucorp Deutschland GmbH +49 (0) 89 455 659 0

Acucorp France S.A.R.L. +33 (0) 1 53 34 9000

Acucorp UK Limited +44 (0) 20 8843 7100

Worldwide Locations—For a complete listing, visit www.acucorp.com/company/locations

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Business Issue

L'Oréal Mexico was hosting its constantly-evolving, proprietary application, used for industrial processing, production, warehousing, distribution, and quality control, on an HP e3000 server. When HP announced the end of support for the HP e3000, L'Oréal realized that a move to another platform could reduce support costs while allowing them to stay with a trusted vendor.

Solution

L'Oréal chose to migrate from the HP e3000 to an HP ProLiant DL740 server running Windows 2000 Advanced Server with Microsoft SQL Server 2000, and convert from HP COBOL II to ACUCOBOL-GT®. Although L'Oréal considered the possibility of recreating the programs in Visual Basic, this would have required re-engineering the software, investing in change management, and accepting a high degree of risk during the stabilization period for the new programs. All of this quickly dissuaded them from changing languages. The COBOL-to-COBOL conversion provided a rapid solution that preserved their 16-year investment in the existing code, saving them the time and expense involved in rewriting a 400-program application. The conversion also allowed them to keep their existing character-based interface, while preserving the possibility of adding a COBOL graphical interface in the future. This saved them from having to invest in new training in the short term, and kept a familiar user interface in place during the stabilization period.

L'Oréal Mexico chose Acucorp based on the options available for life after migration, including the ability to interoperate with other technologies.

The migration was completed in eight months, including the time that L'Oréal's developers spent getting up to speed with ACUCOBOL-GT, as well as time spent creating new programs and re-working existing programs. This left just four months of intensive conversion work. IT Manager Jesús Solórzano describes the migration process as "painless," explaining, "It's rare that a project actually falls within the allotted budget and timeline. But this conversion came in right on budget, and the only delay with the timeline resulted from our decision to make code modifications due to inevitable changes in business operations."

Benefits

The migration enabled L'Oréal Mexico to reduce ongoing annual hardware support costs by 95 percent. In addition, the Microsoft Windows operating system is familiar to most of the facility's personnel, and system and network support for Windows 2000 Server is available locally at reasonable prices.

Future Plans

L'Oréal's subsidiary plans to investigate different database possibilities. They also hope to develop and gradually incorporate a COBOL-based graphical user interface for their application.