

Leading through Quality

The ZG Raiffeisen understands itself as being a modern, innovative, efficient, cooperative business and service-organization. The determinant leading motifs of ZG Raiffeisen is the close connection to the region and to the people living in this region. The cooperative idea has its roots in the bringing together of interests, the common utilization of resources and a united market appearance.

ZG Raiffeisen acts as an interface between producer and consumer and focuses on the economical strengthening of the member and the supply of high-value, high-quality and price-conscious products and services to the customer.

Automated procedures for fast and secure order processing to the Raiffeisen Kraftfutterwerke (RKW, production plants for concentrated feed) is one of the main focus points of the data-processing department. tcACCESS is the link between the traditional data-processing and the Inventory Management System of the RKW in Kehl.

ZG Raiffeisen is located in Karlsruhe and uses an IBM MP2003-105 with VSE/ESA 2.3. All mainframe applications have been developed in COBOL and ASSEMBLER. More than 100 branch offices are remotely connected with the central CICS-application using 3270 emulations on WINDOWS NT machines. VSAM is being used as the mainframe data-store.

The contact to B.O.S. was established at the end of 1999. ZG Raiffeisen was looking for a solution to access their VSAM files directly from WINDOWS applications. Some procedures already had been implemented to use OLE from VBA-macros and read the contents of 3270 screens. The procedures however did not meet the requirements for user friendliness.

"In May 2000 we decided to install tcACCESS," says Alfred Gänzle, Manager Data-Processing at ZG Raiffeisen. "We didn't encounter any problems during the install and the support team of B.O.S. was very helpful and cooperative."

ZG Raiffeisen requested support from B.O.S. to implement a first proto-type. Jürgen Henninger, System-programmer remembers: "At this very day we managed to access our VSAM files using SQL. Because our VSAM files were based on multiple record types, we have been surprised, how fast we could access these file structures by simply defining a relational view. All we needed to create the tcACCESS table definitions was the import of our existing COBOL Copy-books into tcACCESS. tcACCESS provides a utility to perform this function."

Different test have been run which convinced ZG Raiffeisen that tcACCESS was the right product to connect the mainframe with the WINDOWS world.

In the meantime the full order processing system between the remote branch offices and the RKW in Kehl has been automated with tcACCESS. Jürgen Henninger: "If the end user creates an order in the branch office, tcACCESS will process and transfer the order information completely transparent to the end user to the RKW Kehl. Everything happens behind the scenes of the CICS-application. The application prepares the order information in a special pre-defined format and writes them into a CICS-TS-Queue.

Then the CICS-COBOL-program talks to tcACCESS and starts a so-called task. The name of the TS-Queue and the name of the PC file to be used to store the order information are being passed to tcACCESS as parameter of the task. tcACCESS checks, which workstation has been registered for the task and will assume responsibility to process the task. Task registration at the Workstation is the job of the tcACCESS Listener. When the task is being started at the mainframe, the tcACCESS mainframe component informs the Listener that the task is ready to be processed. The Listener automatically starts a Batch and passes the parameter to it. The batch invokes a tcACCESS utility to download the TS-Queue and places the ordering information into a special directory of the server of the Inventory Management System. The file name used is one of the parameters, which have been passed to the batch by the COBOL-program. The Inventory Management System regularly polls the directory. If a new order file has been found, it is transferred into the system and the responsible user will be notified by an animated symbol on the application desktop. This procedure works very well every day. It is secure and safe, because everything happening at the mainframe and the workstation is communicated to the other application by tcACCESS using return codes. The initiating CICS-application can react in case of an error."

Aside the RKW Kehl there are two more RKWs, which are using the ordering system. A central PC at Karlsruhe is processing the ordering information. tcACCESS prepares the order information and transfers it to the RKW in defined time intervals.

Jürgen Henninger: "Our next step will be to replace the OLE-based applications by tcACCESS. Using the tcACCESS Listener we now can easily start MS-WORD directly from our CICS-applications. We can pass data to MS-WORD and specify what form to use with this data. The letters can then be printed directly at the users workplace. We already have developed a proto-type for this application. As usual, we could count on B.O.S. support for helping us with the development of the proto-type. We are extremely happy with tcACCESS and thank the B.O.S. support for being a reliable and competent partner."

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