

ACG - APPLICAZIONI CONTABILI GESTIONALI

IBM® ERP's SOLUTION FOR

THE ITALIAN MARKET

ACG, a branch of IBM®, has been during the last 20 years, the Italian leading provider of the software solutions for IBM's iSeries™. Their key activity focuses on selling ERP systems covering all the accounting, financial, and management needs. Originally, this solution was developed by IBM® itself to meet the demand of small and medium-size businesses, but today ACG's clients are also large companies.

After a detailed research within the available solutions and tools, IBM ACG has selected Caravel™ as their most favorable option

The success of ACG was so great that for a period, every iSeries system directed to the Italian market included this software as a standard feature. A huge network of ISVs based their own solutions on ACG basic functionality developing solutions for almost every market.

Today the ACG suite is well known as the ERP leading solution in Italy.

THE SOLUTION

ACG, the acronym for Applicazioni Contabili Gestionali, enjoys high prestige being the market-leading solution in Italy.

The ACG is a ERP software that covers all the accounting, financial, supply chain, manufacturing and general management needs of any Italian company. It is a solution originally developed by IBM® for AS/400 and iSeries™. This solution was linked to AS/400® marketing activity, so it is installed in many IBM® clients in Italy. ACG has a commercial network selling the solution that counts with more than 400 IBM® partners.

Due to the structure of ACG this ERP offers an easy path to build vertical solutions around it. Because, mostly of these partners are Independent Software Vendors too, they have developed an huge catalog of specialized solutions based on ACG and covering almost every sectors or economic activity.



THE CHALLENGE

Despite his success, ACG was finding an increasingly difficulties to penetrate the market as a consequence of the strong competition from new solutions based on open platforms.

Additionally, even the RPG/400® legacy system was very reliable, it was difficult to evolve, develop and maintain or integrate with other open products.

After a strategic analysis of their market position, ACG had decided to modernize their ERP for iSeries™ accessing open environments. For that purpose several options were considered, from *webfacing* to rebuilding in J2EE technology the whole system.

The main goal was to keep the exact functionality, while modifying the base technology.

Even if the customer considered to offer a 100% open multi-platform solution, special attention was paid to the IBM technology products as DB2® and WebSphere®.

A entirely rebuild process in Java was started, using a group of analysts and programmers, from Europe and India.

At this point was clear that the new product, that was called ACD Vision Four, would need more than 5 years to arrive to the be ready for the market. In the meanwhile, there was a real risk of losing a part of the customers.

So was needed a solution to translate to Java, quickly to be able to offer the new version of ACG product in few months, to close the gap between original RPG/COBOL version and future Vision Four.

THE CUSTOMER NEEDS

ACG modernization was driven by the Italian market demand for a solution with a (1) modern interface, (2) Web based architecture and (3) a friendly-user environment. Additionally was necessary to provide a way to modernize simultaneously the vertical solutions developed by the IBM Business Partners.

So the project included the conversion of the ERP, the training of the Business Partners in the new Java technology and the conversion of the vertical solutions developed by ISVs.

Before the main conversion an initial contract was signed, covering a 3 months test, including the use of all the Caravel technology and conversion of a part of the ACG ERP. For the test, were selected the parts of the system considered as the difficult issues. During this test all the main aspect of the modernization process were considered.



SPECIFIC PROJECT FEATURES

ON-LINE HELP

BASE 100 converted the entire ACG, Applicazioni Contabili Gestionali to Java™. We can point out several decisive project features within the conversion process. BASE 100 converted entirely their ON-LINE Help system for AS/400® through PNLGRP objects. This HELP system for iSeries™ was migrated to HTML with reengineering Caravel™ Tools.

THE PORTAL

The most remarkable technological challenge in the project was that the client had previously developed a specific PORTAL for WEB applications. The PORTAL had integrated everything needed by the end-users. BASE 100' technical team created specific developments to integrate the PORTAL with the rest of the converted system with Caravel™ to J2EE™ technology.

The current Web application allows the integration of all departments within a company with its web portal. It is

based on a consolidated structure, totally scalable and very safe allowing users enter the PORTAL anywhere.

Besides, among other great features the users may communicate with partners and clients trough facilities such as instant messaging.

DATA MIGRATION

During the migration project, the first characteristic to point out is the VIEW migration implemented using the new migration tools within Caravel™ Family Products. All data was integrated from VIEWS used by RPG/ILE programs with access by embedded SQL. Meanwhile, special processes were performed to migrate the data with multi-register structures files as they require a special data migration from EBCDIC to ASCII.

CUA NORMS

Screen personalization from the original ACG system was easily evolved. The original application met CUA NORMS from IBM® for the development of 5250 iSeries™ screens. The interface personalization was made with minimum

effort thanks to Caravel™ automated process technology in this field: "Caravel™ Point of View". The conversion was quick and effective since the same development patterns were observed during the original programming.

SKIN IMPLEMENTATION

BASE 100 implemented all functionality linked to the screen

register of Pulldown. An important part of the application used that kind of Pulldown features. The new implementation was performed in order to maintain all the original advantages and features for the end users.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The Caravel™ conversion projects imply a close interaction between the client and BASE 100. ACG & BASE 100 had perfect understanding in the day-by-day working relationship that led to a good project development. The ACG project is considered to be a "model project".

CUSTOMERS BENEFITS

The main benefit for the ACG group is to have a leading solution deployable in any platform, ready for the market. They also complete the entire range of IBM® platforms by having a solution oriented towards the new iSeries™ and pSeries®.

They also got the advantage of a Java application using the main industry standards: WebSphere®, J2EE™, HTML & XML. Now, ACG strengthens their competitive position having a variety of technological innovations offering clients any solution they may require.

The ACG technical team received specific J2EE™ training. The team was evolving simultaneously with the solution in their know-how about the new programming languages that now represent the market standard. Programmers received Java training and learned new tools while increasing their original technological profile. Furthermore, BASE 100 also offers specific training for the transition from RPG & COBOL programmers into Java™ world. The final outcome of the project was the integration of both, not only systems but also human resources to Java™ technology.

By means of Caravel™ ACG has maintained his presence in the market with competitive Web based, open solutions which are fully compatible with the new Java developments.

After the main conversion IBM and BASE100 team have maintained a continued support activity, with new conversion of the new RPG or COBOL ACG developments or

modifications, and technical service according the most demanding IBM standards.

	Original Platform	Final Platform
Programming languages	RPG/400®	Java™, HTML, XML
Operating System	OS/400®	SUSE® LINUX®
Data Base	DB2/400	DB2®
Hardware	AS/400®	Multi-platform
Number of RPG objects	20.225	