

Mainline Makes AccuRecord's Benefits Management Solution Faster, More Efficient & Less Costly

When you login to review your 401(k) balance and manage contribution allocations, the 24-by-7 service you use may be provided by AccuRecord, one of the leading innovators of recordkeeping and administrative services for the defined contribution industry.

AccuRecord's name is not well known by plan participants because its core business is to provide financial institutions and investment firms with their proprietary benefits software solution for benefits management. AccuRecord's customer base is comprised of insurance companies, banks, investment managers, third-party administrators or individual corporations who leverage AccuRecord's integrated voice response systems and Internet portals, which are constantly being enhanced to improve the plan participant's experience.

The Challenge

Hitachi, AccuRecord's legacy system provider, was sun-setting their mainframe business and would no longer support current or future software. John Bradley, executive vice president, called IBM for solution help and was referred to Mainline Information Systems™, an IBM premier business partner with local representatives who could assist with the entire solution process, from design through implementation.

Steve Tenczar, account executive for Mainline, and Charlie Elko, systems engineer, worked with Bradley to identify solution requirements and create a solution design. Existing infrastructure issues included:

- Existing technology was more than ten years old
- Existing application drives could not connect to newer processor systems
- Existing maintenance costs and software license fees were high

Because data storage and processing power are key to AccuRecord's business success, the new solution needed to meet these key demands:

- Provide better performance for the company's nightly & monthly batch processing
- Deliver 24 x 7 availability
- Lower total cost of ownership.

During the first meeting, Bradley and the Mainline team began to develop the teamwork and collaboration that would characterize the project. As Bradley expressed it, "We established a good rapport, and I felt that the team had a good understanding of the situation we were facing."

The Mainline team subsequently conducted processor, workloads and storage system studies, then analyzed the results to determine the best platforms for the workload demands.

The Solution

Tenczar and Elko presented their recommendations to Bradley, demonstrating that it was less expensive to purchase a new processor and replace their storage, than to just replace the storage. "Based on data and workload information, we recommended the IBM z9 Business Class (z9 BC) processor," said Tenczar. "It's



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The Challenge...

- Legacy systems comprised of older technology
- Sun-set of existing mainframe solution
- Insufficient, less-accessible storage
- Maintenance costs were high

The Solution...

- IBM z9 BC
- IBM DS8100 Storage
- Logical Partitioning (LPAR)
- Mainline Professional Services

The Benefits...

- Better performance & responsiveness
- Lower TCO
- Lower software and maintenance costs
- Sub-capacity pricing
- Lower storage media costs

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reliable, scalable, and represents the latest technology available." They also recommended using a single rather than dual processor, as the initial study demonstrated that a uniprocessor was better because of the batch processing work, which can better utilize a faster, single engine. Elko commented, "We also recommended the IBM DS8100 Storage, to provide high-performance storage with future growth options."

Other elements of the recommended solution included Mainline Professional Services and Advanced Dynamic Logical Partitioning (LPAR), which allows a single partition to act as a completely separate OS. This gave AccuRecord added flexibility to perform testing in the LPAR environment without impacting production work, and it provided a platform to facilitate bringing new OS versions online.

"When I met the Mainline team, I didn't understand the latest level of technology," Bradley confided. "They introduced me to the possibilities and I implemented the complete solution they recommended. I especially like the 'pay-for-what-you-use' aspect of the sub-capacity billing that was included in the z9. It had the ability to lower my monthly software cost and contribute to a lower TCO."

Implementation

Charlie Elko led the implementation team that converted the Hitachi legacy system to the new IBM environment. In planning for the physical installation, Elko worked with the AccuRecord team, IBM and Mainline to ensure that the site was ready for the new machines. IBM took the lead role in getting the z9 installed and operation-ready.

The Mainline Professional Services team made sure that the AccuRecord software was configured correctly on the new machine and running at peak performance levels.

On a Saturday morning, in under two hours, Elko and Steve Oswald, a Mainline systems programmer, cutover the Hitachi processor to the z9. After the cutover, Doyle Banks, a Mainline systems engineer, migrated the data from the Hitachi disks to the IBM DS8100, which Elko had previously configured. This migration took three hours, while the system was fully operational. The improvement in processing using the disks was immediately apparent!

Bradley was impressed. "Mainline flawlessly completed the data transfer from the Hitachi DASD to the IBM DS8100 in less than three hours. It boggles my mind to think how quickly that was done," he said.

The Results

"With this solution, AccuRecord went from 'pretty good' to 'great' – and it was done at an excellent price-point," said Bradley. "Previously, our monthly run would take seven hours. Today we are finishing in 2.5 hours. With this new technology, maintenance costs are reduced, and we've cut software expense by 40 percent," he specified.

The upgraded tape system on the z9 also contribute to a lower TCO by reducing the time and cartridges required for system back-up.

"Providing and storing information for plan participants and client organizations is central to our business. The Mainline solution is helping us serve our customers faster, more comprehensively and more economically," Bradley concluded.



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