

A flexible e-business solution for today and tomorrow at BRUNATA Hürth

Headquartered in Hürth, Germany, BRUNATA Hürth produces units and systems for monitoring the consumption of energy and water in private residences and commercial buildings. Property owners or tenants then can be billed for actual usage. The company, which is a member of the BRUNATA METRONA Group, has about 450 permanent employees and works with another 700 independent salesmen, installation experts, and meter readers. A key service of BRUNATA Hürth – the billing of energy and water costs – is based upon a modern application set that exploits z/VM™, VSE/ESA™, and Communication Program Generator (CPG) from Lattwein GmbH of Düren, Germany.

The need for precision

As a company specialized in the tracking and billing of energy and water costs, BRUNATA needs an IT system that satisfies the requirements of German laws, building administrators, and individual consumers. *Predictable* and *customer-specific* billing are thus the cornerstones of the mission-critical billing application which the company has developed in-house.

Today at the headquarters in Hürth, an IBM 9672-RA6 (G5) with z/VM 3.1 and VSE/ESA 2.3 provides centralized support. VM acts as the hypervisor for eight VSE/ESA systems, one of which is the base for the billing application.

Moving to the Internet and e-business

As part of the billing process, data related to energy consumption is collected from calorimeters that are installed in buildings or individual residences. This data is then transferred to BRUNATA, which calculates costs and creates a bill. In the past, the entire process was done "by hand." To increase efficiency, the company decided to make the billing application available over the Internet. Advantages to this include:

- ❑ **Greater speed and accuracy** – For example, plausibility checking of online input can detect errors earlier.
- ❑ **Cost advantages for BRUNATA and their customers** – With the new application, mailing costs, costs for entering data into the system, and printing costs for data entry sheets have been minimized.
- ❑ **Application optimization** – Accurate date entry is critical to the time it takes to process a bill and its correctness. Now individual property owners or landlords have the possibility to enter that information themselves.

The new solution's foundation

Today's billing application runs under CICS/VSE™ 2.3 and accesses DB2® and DL/I data. Through a Web browser, users sign on to BRUNATA's centralized system and see a data input form similar to the paper form used before. All input is collected in a temporary dataset and inserted in a target database via a batch program.

The application development tool that BRUNATA used to create this interface is CPG from Lattwein, an IBM Business Partner. Lattwein has offered and enhanced CPG for almost 20 years. Since 1997, CPG5 helps mainframe developers create Web-based applications using the skills that they already have. A three-tier approach with TCP/IP connectivity often is implemented in such applications. The middle tier supports security functions like SSL and Proxy Server.

For the middle tier, BRUNATA currently uses the Apache Web Server under Linux® on an Intel® machine. With the availability of Linux for S/390®, porting the middle tier to the mainframe became a possibility. Tests for a physical two-tier solution that takes advantage of S/390's reliability already have started.

The right system, the right support

BRUNATA is happy that it didn't follow the decentralization trends of the 1990s. The existing IT team – experienced in VSE, CICS® and host-based applications – supports the company from an efficient, centralized mainframe location.

For "modern," e-business projects like the one outlined here, the team receives excellent support from Lattwein. For example, Lattwein gave them a three-day seminar to kick off the development of their first browser applications. Lattwein also enhanced CPG with a new feature which met the team's specific technical requirements for the billing application.

Success through teamwork. That's the key at BRUNATA Hürth!

Additional information

BRUNATA Hürth has its home page (in German) at:

www.brunata-huerth.de

To learn more about CPG and other solutions from Lattwein, access: www.lattwein.de

Sample Billing Application Screen



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