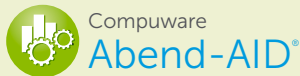


INDUSTRY

Loyalty Marketing Services

CHALLENGE

Enable developers with varying skill levels to both understand and be productive developing and maintaining mainframe programs

SOLUTION**RESULTS**

- Increased adoption of modern Eclipse-based IDE in place of “green screen”
- Increased mainframe developer productivity and efficiency
- Mainframe programs made easier to understand for Java programmers
- Cross-platform teams easily handle front- and back-end development

COBOL Programmers Leave ‘Green Screen’ Behind for Topaz Workbench

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

For years, the COBOL developers at a leading provider of loyalty and marketing solutions have remained steadfast users of Compuware development tools, including **Abend-AID**, **File-AID**, **Strobe** and **Xpediter**.

While many of its mainframe developers still use the “green screen,” in contrast, the company’s Java developers, many of whom are young professionals, use Eclipse, a modern integrated development environment (IDE).

Some of these Java developers are being asked to handle production support for applications that require them to look at source code on the mainframe. The conventional way to do this is through the green screen, which requires additional set up and can be a hassle to work with for Java developers and other cross-platform teams who are not as familiar with the mainframe. They prefer an Eclipse-based tool that makes their back-end COBOL development, analysis and problem diagnosis familiar and intuitive, mirroring the IDE of their front-end Java development.

In other cases, the green screen can even cause work for experienced COBOL developers to be tedious and time-consuming, such as when editing complicated text files for web-service development that ties into Unix system services on the mainframe.

That is why after seeing a demo of Compuware **Topaz Workbench**—an Eclipse-based IDE that provides access to the essentials of mainframe application development and testing and is offered complimentary to maintenance-paying Compuware customers—a senior technical specialist saw an opportunity, especially in their role leading the adoption and popularization of tools at the company.

Experienced in object-oriented programming with Java and procedural programming with COBOL development, they understood the benefits the Eclipse environment Topaz Workbench provided over the conventional green screen.

“I thought, wait a second, we’re digging through all these green screens, but there’s this real easy-to-use GUI interface?” they said.

SOLUTION

In their role, the senior technical specialist installs and configures various tools and products, providing them the opportunity to explore their functional capabilities, as well as help other developers understand how the tools work.



They obtained the executable for Topaz Workbench and started exploring its variety of functions. Using Host Explorer, they could navigate, access and use mainframe and Unix datasets with ease. Using iStrobe in Topaz provided them with a simple three-click drill down, allowing them to locate performance issues on the mainframe. Using Xpediter, Compuware's interactive debugging tool, with the new interface made jumping into an Xpediter session quick and easy and accelerated debugging.

As the user explored the elegant simplicity enabled through Topaz Workbench, colleagues took interest in several functions that made tasks easy through the modern interface, including:

- Using SlickEdit for COBOL code completion
- Easy program compiling without needing to continuously hit enter
- Straightforward copying of datasets and files between LPARs
- Right-click job submission into a PDS, with output appearing in the lower screen's JES explorer

The senior technical specialist was in a unique position to champion Topaz Workbench in their organization. They began deliberately targeting groups whose productivity it was thought would benefit from using the IDE, and they encouraged developers to attend Topaz Workbench instruction classes that Compuware was hosting for the company.

"That's how we started rolling it out. People who were familiar with Eclipse for Java development saw you could do the same thing with COBOL," they said.

RESULTS

The senior technical specialist says if you talk to the developers using Topaz Workbench, they are more productive today, especially when launching a debugging session from it, which they do often.

"Just being able to set up your breakpoints one time and make quick changes, then fire that back up and test them. That's been really beneficial," they said.

Java developers crossing over and being expected to look at the mainframe are relieved when they can pull up Eclipse to see source code without looking at a green screen. Likewise, groups with distributed teams who also handle COBOL development are increasingly adopting Topaz Workbench.

"People are learning how they can use these tools to speed up and become more efficient. You can go do other things through Topaz Workbench while you wait for a compile to finish and a message will pop up when it's done so you can immediately go do your new copies and slip right into an Xpediter session with one click," the senior technical specialist said.

Based on the company's experience with Topaz Workbench and other tools, it's looking forward to enhancements and new releases that will help its current developers be more productive and help new developers be more comfortable with a platform and language they have not previously encountered.

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