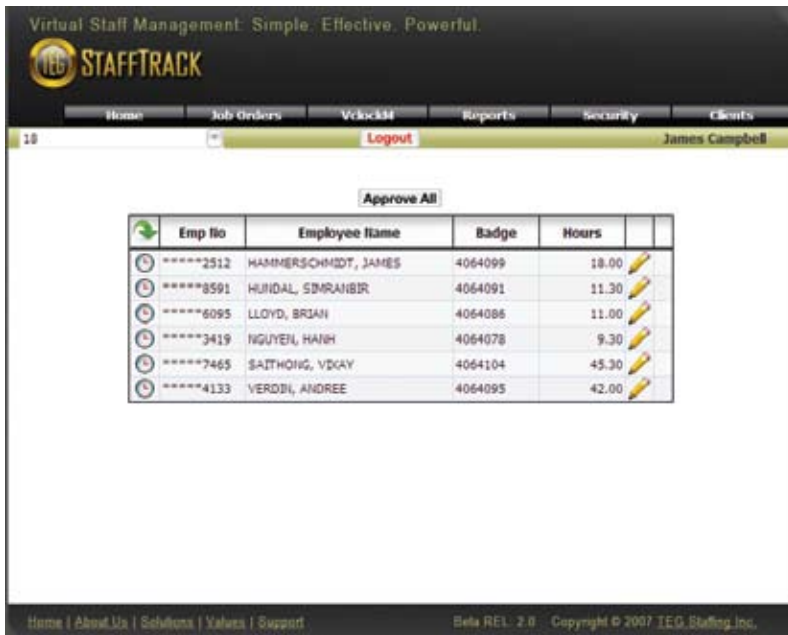


Eplica Wins Multi-Million-Dollar Client, Thanks to Verastream Host Integrator

Fast web-enablement of AS/400 application seals the deal



QUICK VIEW

Problem

Needed a simple interface for real-time access to iSeries and OpenVMS systems.

Solution

Used Verastream Host Integrator to web-enable back-end systems, without rearchitecting applications' code or security structures.

Results

- Won a multi-million-dollar client contract.
- Simplified and automated tasks while creating new capabilities such as real-time reporting.
- Resulted in significant cost savings and eliminated thousands of pages of paperwork.
- Put a rapid application-development platform in place for ongoing projects.

San Diego-based Eplica provides business services to employment-staffing companies and other organizations across the U.S. Eplica often serves as a virtual IT department for their clients, offering a range of automated staffing-specific solutions including back-office services. That means Eplica's own IT systems must be flexible enough to work with a variety of technologies and business models.

Prospective Client, Tough Criteria

The chance to win a multi-million-dollar account set some urgent wheels in motion at Eplica and the IT team had to move fast to meet the prospect's requirements. A "must have" for this large international client was the ability for employees to clock in and out directly from their PCs. Eplica could not economically provide onsite training for employees and managers to deal with complex navigation or intimidating green screens associated with the AS/400-based timekeeping application. Therefore, Eplica would have to provide a new, user-friendly employee interface.

Finding the right answer for this challenge might have been a problem. But Eplica solutions architect Brad Taylor reported his company already had a technology partner with more than 27 years of experience in mainframe and midrange systems. "As long-time users of Attachmate® Reflection® for the Web, we had come to value that product's security, centralized management, and user access via the web. Those are huge considerations for us," Taylor said. "That's why we've been using Reflection here for about as long as we've had computers."

This partner loyalty, combined with the appeal of a single vendor for their host solutions, led Eplica to evaluate Attachmate® Verastream® Host Integrator for web-enablement of the timekeeping application. Taylor said

they ultimately chose Verastream for three main reasons: product flexibility, exceptional robustness, and proven track record with Attachmate customer service.

Rising to the Challenge

With Verastream Host Integrator, Taylor and his IT team quickly encapsulated key data and logic from the timekeeping application. They used the resulting services to create a streamlined web interface, and did it all without touching the back-end midrange system.

In just three days, Eplica had the new web-based timekeeping solution deployed and interactive with the prospective client. Some 220 employees clocked in, completely avoiding green-screen navigation while Verastream performed the complex operations on the back end. Users simply entered their badge number on a web page to activate the electronic time clock and trigger the automated procedure. "Managers were able to approve employees' times right away," said Taylor. "It was so easy that no training was necessary."

The quick creation of that flawless functionality had the desired result: Eplica's important prospect signed on to become a very satisfied

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– Brad Taylor
Solutions Architect
Eplica

client. And that client realized millions of dollars in revenues during the first year of Verastream deployment, because they were able to offer their own set of clients a range of expanded services. Subsequently, that original valuable client generated some significant customer referrals for Eplica. “And none of it would’ve happened without Verastream,” Taylor said.

Living by the Rules of SOA

In the process of using Verastream to create services for their timekeeping solution, Eplica established a rapid application-development platform for other projects. Because they don’t have to repeatedly abstract the technical and

procedural details of the host application, each new solution can be created faster than the one before it.

For example, they reused their already-generated services as building blocks for applications that run reports and follow the progress of each job in real time. In fact, Taylor said, “We continue to find new uses for Verastream every day.” He noted that, thanks to Verastream, Eplica has recently provided clients with online applicant tracking and automated billing—in addition to the electronic timekeeping—all in one interface.

OpenVMS? No Problem.

Eplica developed its vendor management system, called TEG StaffTrack, in-house. Among other things, TEG StaffTrack is designed to monitor the full scope of client business, from original job orders, to invoicing, through final payment. To do this, TEG StaffTrack must communicate with Eplica’s core staffing-specific application, which uses VT emulation and runs on an OpenVMS platform.

Although a number of integration-software vendors claim to handle VT interfaces, it’s rare to find one with that actual competence. Character-based applications can present a tough integration challenge, and many vendor skill sets are limited to the easier-to-integrate IBM mainframe applications using block-mode emulation.

The good news for Eplica was that Verastream easily handles complex, character-based environments. “You can view the data stream and pinpoint exactly what you need, eliminating the guesswork,” said Taylor. This functionality became especially useful when Eplica created its solution to simplify tasks like order entry. “Now clients can enter the order information directly into our OpenVMS application because Verastream manages all the complexities of the system,” Taylor said. “The whole process is automated.”

The Verastream Advantage

With Verastream, host data and logic are encapsulated as web services, XML, Java, or .NET components that can be integrated with other business applications such as Eplica’s TEG StaffTrack. Because

Verastream Host Integrator is noninvasive to the host, Eplica was able to accomplish this task without compromising the security of their legacy systems.

Verastream can leverage user security settings on local runtime servers or use Lightweight Directory Access Protocol. SSL public key cryptography ensures the protection of all data passed between client web applications and the Verastream runtime server. Any host-based security implementations (such as RACF, TopSecret, or ACF-2) remain fully in force.

“Security is an important consideration because the confidentiality of our client information on the back end needs to be bullet-proof,” said Taylor. “Using Verastream, we didn’t have to rearchitect any security. We just leveraged the security that was already built into the application.” The benefit for Eplica is that clients can now submit and track orders electronically through a secure client portal.

As a company whose tagline is “Fast Forward Your Profits,” it seems Eplica has discovered the best way to fast forward your legacy integration, too. “Verastream has eliminated the keying in, reviewing, and approving of thousands of pages of paperwork for us,” said Taylor. “And because Verastream is so fast and easy to use, it’s given us huge cost savings.”

About Verastream Legacy Integration Solutions

The Attachmate Verastream product line comprises a complete range of mainframe and web modernization tools—from basic rejuvenation to customized presentation and sophisticated high-performance integration. Verastream-generated services can be mixed, matched, and reused selectively to extend legacy functionality to new users or new composite applications. No code changes to legacy applications are required, so you can avoid risk while speeding up application integration, application development, and workflow enhancement.



Corporate Headquarters
1500 Dexter Avenue North
Seattle, Washington 98109
TEL 206 217 7500
800 872 2829
FAX 206 217 7515

EMEA Headquarters
The Netherlands
TEL +31 71 368 1100
FAX +31 71 368 1181

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Australia
TEL +61 3 9825 2300
FAX +61 3 9825 2399

Latin America Headquarters
Mexico
TEL +52 55 9178 4970
FAX +52 55 5540 4886

WEB attachmate.com
E-MAIL info@attachmate.com

For regional office information, visit www.attachmate.com.