

PharMerica streamlines processes by modernizing AS/400 application

Verastream Host Integrator is key to web-enablement of cash-posting system



PharMerica is a Kentucky-based pharmaceutical services company focused on hospital and long-term care settings. With some 5,000 employees and more than 120 pharmacies providing national reach, PharMerica offers services that include drug packaging and distribution technologies. The company's 2007 revenues were \$1.8 billion.

PharMerica wanted to reduce the time it took for staff to post cash earnings to the general ledger system. Their 30 cash-posting clerks were grappling with a home-grown System i application built solely for drug-dispensing. Accounting functions were added on the back end at a later time, leaving clerks with an unwieldy process for cash posting.

Complexity Impedes Progress

Here's how a typical transaction got posted: First, clerks had to find the correct pharmacy – from a field of 83 pharmacies and six different AS/400 boxes. Once at the right location, clerks had to get to the correct cash-posting screen, create a batch file, input the financial data (which took them to another screen), and enter the prescription. Then they would go to several other screens to verify that the amount they were posting actually equaled the amount to be applied. They would then return to the original screen, where they would finally post the cash entry before moving to the next line.

It would often require as many as 13 screens to gather the necessary data to post one line of cash. According to application development manager Dan Baylor, this system was inefficient and unacceptable. In the course of

QUICK VIEW

Problem

Multiple AS/400 screens and multiple steps required too much time for cash posting.

Solution

Used Verastream to provide an integrated web interface for simplicity and ease of use.

Results

- Reduced cash posting staff from 30 to 22.
- Reduced training time from two weeks to less than one day.
- Reduced cash-posting process from 13 green screens to one web screen.
- Reduced overtime to an end-of-month occurrence.

seeking a solution, Baylor got a suggestion from the PharMerica application development director, who had prior success in using Attachmate® Verastream® for application integration.

Meeting Demanding Criteria

Verastream Host Integrator encapsulates business data and logic via the screen interface to enable mainframe modernization. You get rapid results because you can use existing development skills, familiar IT tools, and proven mainframe investments.

Whether your environment is IBM System z (S/390), IBM System i (AS/400), UNIX, OpenVMS, or HP e3000, Verastream can give users a new look and feel, without disturbing mainframe-application code. In fact, Baylor reported that this noninvasive capability was essential to any prospective solution on his list.

Customized Evaluation Options

After ruling out three other products on the market, the PharMerica IT team walked through a Verastream WebEx presentation. These customized demos use a live host connection to show companies how they can web- or service-enable their mainframe functionality, in less than an hour. (For Verastream WebEx info, see <http://www.attachmate.com/Evals/vs-web-ex-demo/vs-web-ex-demo.htm>)

Next, Attachmate Consulting Services performed an on-site proof of concept. Once

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PharMerica

these various components of due diligence were completed, Baylor and Patrick Daugherty, PharMerica's director of cash processing & Medicare Part D billing, knew they were on the right track with Verastream.

Getting Up to Speed, Painlessly

Baylor's development team worked closely with the business unit and subject matter experts to arrive at the right solution. After the workflows of the AS/400 application were pinned down, Verastream allowed PharMerica developers to make modifications using their existing skills and their platforms of choice, without having to learn new technologies. They isolated the necessary information on the AS/400 applications and created a front end that would directly pull that data for posting.

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different developers had to be involved in the project at various times, the quick Verastream learning curve became very important to us.”

A Modernized System Speeds Up Performance

Now, data-entry clerks use a new web interface to accomplish their tasks in real time. A single easy-to-use screen provides an updated graphical environment and a streamlined workflow. The Verastream solution is working behind the scenes to make it all happen; no changes to the original AS/400 application were made.

When they come to the web site, users log in with their AS/400 credentials, so each step taken is linked to the appropriate user. This enables managers like Baylor and Daugherty to comply with the company's auditing procedures, which dictate a one-to-one match with a valid user I.D. for each activity. Furthermore, the Verastream logging feature allows after-the-fact verification of the process for auditing purposes.

Achieving Measurable Results with Verastream

One result of the streamlined system is that Baylor has reduced the staff of cash-posting workers from 30 to 22. The remaining eight employees are now freed up for other assignments within PharMerica. And before, data-entry clerks had to work overtime throughout the month to keep up with

a labor-intensive process. Now overtime, if needed, can be limited to the end of the month, when additional payments are received.

Training time has also been reduced by the Verastream solution. Daugherty reported that training used to take up to two weeks for each new clerk. “Thanks to Verastream, our new employees can now do cash posting the same day they start,” he said.

About Verastream

Verastream Host Integrator is part of the Attachmate Verastream product line, which provides application integration tools that quickly and noninvasively service-enable all types of mainframe and enterprise host functionality. Through its use of industry standards such as web services, J2EE, and .NET, Verastream automatically generates services that can be mixed, matched, and reused. No code changes to existing applications are required, so you can avoid risk while speeding up application integration, application development, and workflow enhancement.

About Attachmate

Attachmate delivers advanced software for terminal emulation, application integration, and secure communications. Our NetIQ® business provides solutions for management of applications, enterprise systems, security, compliance, and operational VMware. With our technologies, more than 65,000 businesses worldwide are putting their IT assets to work in new and meaningful ways. www.attachmate.com.



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