

Solution from IBM and Edge Information Group, Inc., generates new, improved IT operations for National Grid utility



National Grid recently acquired KeySpan Energy, the largest gas distributor in the Northeast United States and the largest electric power generator in New York State. In the United States, National Grid now delivers electricity to approximately 3.3 million customers in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Rhode Island, and manages the electricity network on Long Island under an agreement with the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA).

It is the largest power producer in New York State, owning 6,650 megawatts of electricity generation that provides power to over one million LIPA customers and supplies roughly a quarter of New York City's electricity needs, as well as the largest distributor of natural gas in the northeastern United States, serving approximately 3.4 million customers in New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

KeySpan itself was the result of a number of recent acquisition, and it faced issues with different programming languages, such as COBOL and PL/I, as well as back level versions of compilers that trace their lineage to the 1980s and 1970s. The size of the accumulated software infrastructure included 30,000 PL/I programs and 3,000 COBOL programs.

The company wanted to end the disparity and provide a single front-end user interface to improve collaboration and to assure customers of dependable service.

KeySpan turned to IBM and Edge Information Group, an IBM Business Partner. The solution included Edge Portfolio Analyzer and features Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) running on IBM Customer Information Control System (CICS®), IBM DB2® Universal Database® and IBM WebSphere® MQ. SOA stresses modularity and reusability of code in building of applications,

IBM Business Partner: Edge Information Group

Edge Information Group, Inc. is an independent software development, consulting and training company. Its flagship product is the Edge Portfolio Analyzer, which provides IBM OS/390 and IBM z/OS users with the ability to understand and control the contents of their application portfolios. Edge is headquartered in Mount Prospect, Illinois.



resulting in more adaptable and less costly applications.

“We were having a major challenge training and retaining new hires to work on our legacy green screen applications,” said Don Stahlin, director of IT technology operations at National Grid.

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“Part of our IT strategy was to address this need using SOA to implement the interface. However, we faced a roadblock,” Stahlin said. “To make efficient use of SOA capabilities, we needed to tie our more user-friendly front end to these old back end systems. In turn, this required us to migrate our systems to the current middleware versions: DB2 Version 8 and CICS TS Version 3.1, and use the new features in the latest PL/I and COBOL compilers for z/OS®,” Stahlin explained.

Stahlin continued: “Many of the CICS programs need to be continuously available to help us track gas leaks and restore power after an outage. As a result, we have to have current versions of our compilers and be using the current language environment to get the best real-time support from IBM in times of crisis. When you’re in the midst of a power outage, our software systems are there to support our teams.”

With help from IBM and Edge, it was able to transition successfully. “It’s like trying to catch up with 10 years of back tax returns,” Stahlin said. “You really can’t do it by yourself. You need help.”

Edge Portfolio Analyzer searches through a client’s entire application portfolio. It lays out a complete software inventory and then goes about analyzing what needs to be fixed.

All of the utility company programs that needed migration now have been migrated. “The Edge tool was of tremendous help. It identified exactly which programs needed what changes, avoiding any unnecessary work and reducing risk,” Stahlin said.

The older COBOL and PL/I compilers are no longer used. “This will help us assure that all future application

changes will use only the new compilers,” Stahlin said.

The Edge Portfolio Analyzer is not just a migration tool. By integrating it into the National Grid regular application development processes, it also will help the company manage normal maintenance updates to its applications in the future.

Edge has been an IBM Business Partner since its founding in 1991. Now an Advanced Business Partner, Edge participates in IBM PartnerWorld® Industry Networks, which offers a rich set of benefits to all IBM PartnerWorld members who want to team with IBM to build their vertical market capabilities, expand their partner network and attract customers in the markets they serve.

Edge is “optimized” in the energy and utilities industry, which means it has developed further specialization by optimizing its applications with IBM technologies, achieving success with its own solutions and other criteria.

Michael Haupt, president of Edge Information Group, said, “IBM is one of our biggest promoters. In addition, IBM developers work with us to make sure that our tools are equipped to help migrate IBM programs to the latest versions – and migrations are no longer a one-time step in today’s IT environment. Each new release brings with it migration issues to exploit new functions.

“IBM PartnerWorld Industry Networks helps us stay ahead of that curve. We just wouldn’t be able to stay in business without their support.”

For more information

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To learn more about Edge Information Group, visit edge-information.com

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