



CZ Actief in Gezondheid

Integrating CICS®/CA Ideal™ Applications into Lotus Notes®

CZ Actief in Gezondheid (CZ), the third largest health insurance provider in the Netherlands, recently merged with OZ, another Dutch provider. As a result, CZ now has 2,500 employees serving more than 3 million customers.

Following the merger, CZ faced the challenge of building a single technology architecture from disparate systems. This challenge, as CZ soon discovered, also represented an opportunity. By adopting OZ's Lotus Notes® workflow application, CZ would be able to streamline operational processes that had been increasing the company's costs. But a key piece was missing – a solution to integrate CZ's legacy CICS® applications, written in CA Ideal™, with the workflow system. They found the integration solution they needed at HostBridge Technology.

Challenge

Before the merger, CZ's utilized an IBM mainframe running CICS/CA Ideal applications that were accessed from terminal emulators on employees' PCs. Most user interactions, from claims and payment processing to policy updates, were handled individually – a labor-intensive, time-consuming, expensive practice. By contrast, OZ's architecture – a legacy mainframe, XML-compliant screen generator (an emulator with added integration capabilities), and the Lotus workflow system – automated part of these processes.

By enabling workflow interactions with their mainframe, CZ realized they too could automate processes, and thus achieve new efficiencies, improve productivity, and cut costs. But first they needed a way to integrate their CA Ideal applications with Lotus Notes.

Requirements

CZ began its investigation of mainframe integration solutions with three requirements:

- *XML-Based.* The solution had to deliver data as integration-ready XML documents.
- *Dynamic, High-Fidelity Automation.* The workflow system and integration solution had to communicate through an API-type interface to ensure dynamic interaction with CA Ideal applications.
- *Field-Name Based Navigation.* The solution had to be able to parse screen definitions and field names written in CA Ideal.

Real CICS Integration

CZ found one mainframe integration solution that met every requirement. HostBridge runs under CICS on the mainframe, converting CICS data to XML documents before terminal data streams are generated. HostBridge also uses field names, not screen coordinates, to identify and navigate through sequences of mainframe screens, thus delivering dramatically better performance and application fidelity than any other solution, particularly in complex, dynamic environments.

Dynamic Process Automation. Communication through an API-type interface was critical, says Roland Luijks, system developer at CZ. "Integration at this programmable level allows us to write complex interactions that respond to what actually happens inside our CA Ideal application." CZ writes interaction scripts in Lotus Notes and relies on XML as its end-to-end communications protocol.

Screen Definitions Library. "An essential HostBridge feature is its ability to parse our screen definitions, which it uses for dynamic application navigation," adds Luijks.

"Our CICS applications are written in CA Ideal," says Bobby Tjassens Keiser, CZ system programmer. "HostBridge rapidly parses our Ideal screen definitions and records them in the

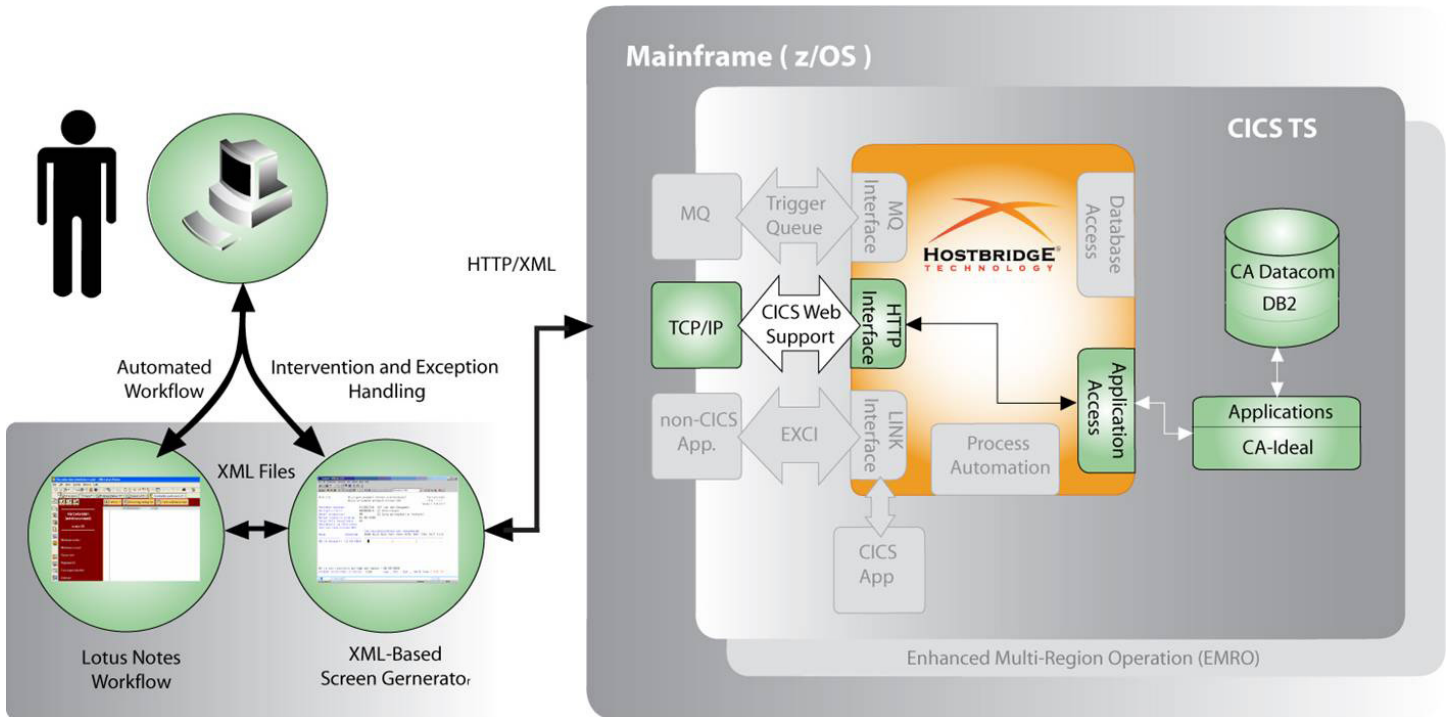
About HostBridge

HostBridge is mainframe-based software that allows CICS applications and data to be accessed by, and integrated with, any type of distributed application. Fast, easy installation with no configuration provides immediate access to your CICS resources as XML documents or Web services.

No screen scraping
No changes to existing CICS applications
No middle tier servers

database. Other solutions would have forced us to build our own library and program the definitions. Also, we frequently modify definitions. A HostBridge utility automates library updates, ensuring that screen definitions are always up-to-date.”

Automation, Plus On-the-Fly Intervention. HostBridge also provides CZ with two big workflow benefits – many CICS transactions are now automated, with screen-to-screen navigation occurring behind the scenes, and as needed, users can interrupt a workflow to execute necessary interventions.



When policy terms change, for example, thousands of customer records have to be updated. Ninety percent of updates run smoothly and automatically through HostBridge. But the remaining 10 percent may require intervention – e.g., to verify a key piece of customer data. HostBridge allows CZ to stop the workflow and display the required Ideal screen to a worker, who takes the necessary action and then resumes the workflow. This flexible capability also handles the occasional exception or error.

HostBridge Teamwork

Getting HostBridge installed and running was straightforward. As development progressed, “HostBridge support was great,” says Tjassens Keiser. “The HostBridge team is thoroughly experienced with CICS and Ideal; they helped us solve very complex problems.” “HostBridge is open to new ideas and committed to finding the best solution,” Luijks adds. “During prototyping, they sat right beside us helping with every step.”

Benefits

HostBridge helped CZ reach its goals of automating mainframe processes and improving staff productivity. “By automating a part of our processes,” Luijks says, “HostBridge makes everyone’s life easier. We have become more efficient and more productive.”

HostBridge has also helped CZ reduce user training. In old legacy days, users might have to navigate a dozen screens to complete a business service. Learning these sequences took considerable time, and training costs were high. With HostBridge in the mix, workflows now navigate the system and training costs are down.

CZ continues to use HostBridge to integrate legacy subsystems with its Lotus solution. And because HostBridge adheres to the latest standards – XML, SOAP, and HTTP – CZ is ready for future integration challenges. “There is still lot of work to be done,” Luijks concludes, “and we have the technology to do it well.”

Contact Information

For more information on HostBridge or to inquire about our free 30-day trial, please contact us using the information below.

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