



Health Insurance Provider

Web-Enabling CICS Using HostBridge and WIRE

A major U.S. health insurance provider supports a network of 70,000 health care locations, including more than 150 hospitals. To ensure quality service to its million-plus plan members, the provider employs hundreds of services personnel to process thousands of claims every day.

In business for half a century, the provider maintains policy information in CICS applications running on an IBM mainframe. Today's employees, however, are challenged by legacy applications. Pressured to provide its 21st century workforce with easy, flexible access to decades-old technology, the provider sought help from Brandon Associates, a national consulting firm. To meet the mainframe access needs of the provider's entire team, Brandon brought together high-performance CICS integration software from HostBridge Technology with a new Web Interface Rules Engine (WIRE).

Challenge

In recent years, the insurance provider's claims processing systems put an increasing drag on productivity. Staff had to access the CICS applications through old terminals and terminal emulation software. The learning curve was steep, particularly since the applications had a depth of business logic with highly complex rules. And even after staff were trained, normal on-the-job interaction through multiple transactions was labor-intensive and slow.

The provider asked Brandon Associates to help identify a solution. One possibility was to build an entirely new services-oriented application that replicated the thousands of original CICS screens and then transfer all legacy data to the new system. But it quickly became apparent that this would require a monumental development effort as well as lengthy testing and retraining cycles.

Brandon and the provider then hit on the right solution. Design a new framework that would leverage existing mainframe-based business logic, enable enhancement of selected application areas, and present data through multiple interfaces for varied users. In other words, modernize the CICS application by effectively transforming it into a mouse-driven web application – with no changes to the legacy application, no loss of productivity, and minimal user training.

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

Technical Requirements

Brandon Associates and the provider identified key requirements for the new solution:

- ▶ *XML-based integration.* The solution needed to convert CICS transactions into XML documents and output them for easy services-based integration.
- ▶ *Interface flexibility.* Multiple interface options would be needed to ensure usability for a diverse user population.
- ▶ *Security.* The privacy of insurance data is required by law, so the solution would have to support existing mainframe security technologies, SSL, and data encryption.

Solution

The first step was to find the right back-end CICS integration software. Brandon found it in HostBridge Extended (HBX).

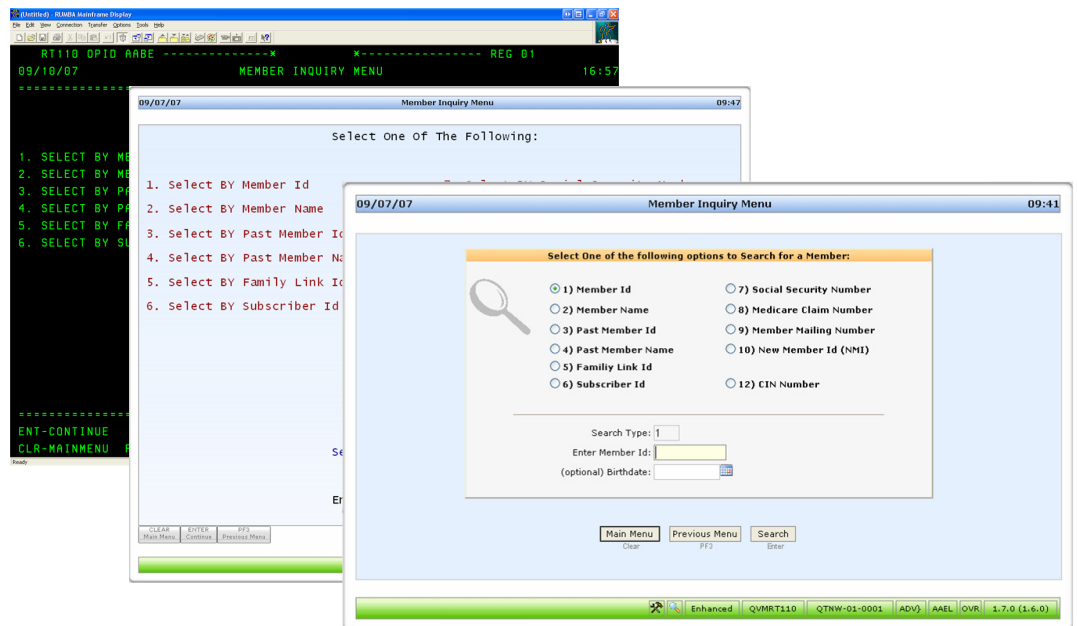
HBX automatically transforms CICS data into XML documents, enabling the integration of CICS with any other enterprise application, web application, or service-oriented architecture (SOA). Installed on the mainframe, HBX utilizes mainframe security fully and also supports

SSL and encryption to protect data in transport. Moreover, HBX's Process Automation Engine processes sequences of CICS screens automatically, creating a single streamlined process from many transactions.

Brandon's second step focused on presentation. Instead of just coding a few ad hoc front-ends, Brandon made the strategic decision to develop an interface development environment that augments HostBridge products and provides a foundation for future evolutions of CICS applications. The result was WIRE, the Web Interface Rules Engine.

WIRE is an object-oriented Microsoft.NET-based programming and run-time environment. Running on Microsoft IIS Web Server and highly scalable, WIRE modernizes CICS applications by providing three presentation modes for users with different skill sets:

- ▶ **Classic Mode** affords a traditional terminal view for seasoned mainframe users.
- ▶ **Standard Mode** cleans up CICS presentation, moving data elements into status bars, navigation tabs, and buttons for users with some knowledge of terminal access.
- ▶ **Enhanced Mode** delivers a web look and feel for today's users, employing XSLT stylesheets to transform CICS screens into HTML-based templates that can include images and other web formatting.



3270 Terminal View, WIRE's Standard and Enhanced Modes

Together, HBX and WIRE provide the health insurance provider with a complete end-to-end solution that meets all requirements – the ability to securely integrate CICS data as XML documents with new web front-ends and provide flexible interface options for different users.

Benefits

Installation and testing of HostBridge and WIRE took less than a week. Within hours of going live, seasoned users and newer hires were able to begin processing claims through “WIREd” screens. Today, the insurance provider is achieving new levels of efficiency and productivity. Claims are now processed faster, the queue of outstanding claims continues to shrink, and as customary workloads decrease, many employees appreciate the opportunity to take on new responsibilities.

In addition, employees now experience “better than 100%” functionality. Since WIRE features full Web services support, employees using Enhanced Mode effectively interact with a new applications that merge HBX's process automation and WIRE's services-based integration of other enterprise applications and data sources. With integration and productivity improving, the insurer is already investigating new ways to streamline business processes.

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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