Major Pharmacy Chain Builds Warehouse Management System with FUSE ESB

Customer Information

Customer: Major retail
                     pharmacy chain
Headquarters: USA
Solution: FUSE ESB with
                     Production Support
                     Subscription

Customer Overview

The Company is an integrated pharmacy services provider, and fills or manages more than one billion prescriptions per year. The Company operates over 6,200 stores across 38 states, manages over 2,000 health plans and has net revenue of approximately $37 billion.

Enterprise Services from IONA used in this Deployment

Training: IONA FUSE ESB
Consulting: 5 days on site,
                            5 days remote
Developer Support: 2 seats
Production Support: 2 quad-core CPU,
                            2 failover

In a given day, thousands of trucks come to warehouse distribution centers to fill their cargo trailers with products. Each truck contacts the warehouse in advance to schedule a slot at a loading dock. The complex scheduling was done manually which lead to expensive errors. Every time a truck was left idling, the Company would have to pay thousands of dollars in penalty fees.

The Application Manager in the warehousing division was determined to change that. He quickly ruled out "multimillion dollar packages" because he had seen too many of them sit on the shelf unused. He also ruled out any technology that was not supported with "intelligent, quick service" as warehouse scheduling is a mission-critical application.

While researching possible approaches, the Application Manager discovered Gregor Hohpe's book, Enterprise Integration Patterns, and was able to diagram the application within a day using icons he downloaded from Hohpe's Web site. When he found out that FUSE ESB, IONA's certified release of Apache's ServiceMix, implemented these patterns and was fully supported, he knew he had found his solution.

Challenge

The first challenge was that the Company housed many generations of technology, and the application had to interface to all systems that affected the scheduling, labor allocation and logging. These included financial applications, third party systems and legacy mainframes. And, the integrations had to be done without a custom component from the vendor.

"We were familiar with IONA's reputation as a provider of integration technology for some of the world's leading companies and knew they had the expertise to support our deployment of open source technology across business-critical systems."

Application Manager, Warehousing
Major Retail Pharmacy chain

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Secondly, the solution could not impose a methodology or development paradigm with a large upfront learning curve on the group. The Company already had a shelf full of expensive enterprise packages that absorbed countless man-hours only to fall short of meeting the group's needs in the end.

And lastly, the solution had to support mission-critical enterprise operations. If the application crashed or malfunctioned in any way, the Company would be looking at paying several thousand dollars per truck that was affected.

Solution

The Company downloaded ServiceMix from the Apache web site and with very little effort the diverse programming prototyped the application. The Application Manager focused on enterprise-class support and downloaded FUSE ESB, IONA's certified and supported release of Apache ServiceMix. The transition was seamless.
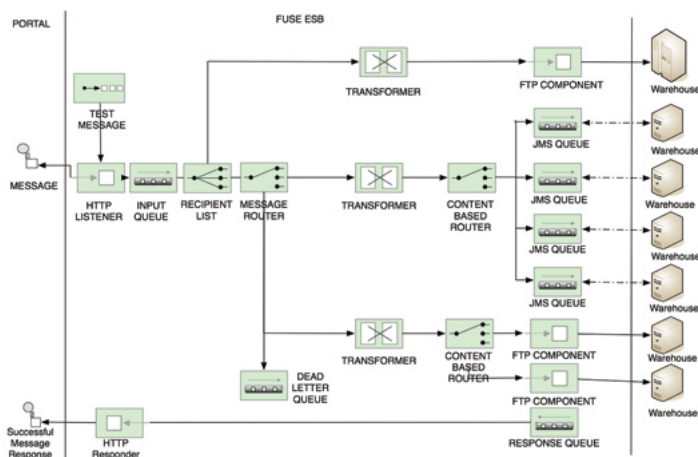
The Application Manager met with the IONA team and found them knowledgeable and capable. He wanted a support team with a proven track record of working with large, enterprise applications and a team that did not outsourced key support operations. While they see code as a commodity, service and advice is not.

The Company brought IONA into the project early to make sure the designs and the architecture were optimal, and to make sure questions were answered accurately and before the group could take any wrong turns. IONA provided consulting, training, and helped with the mainframe integration. CVS now has a 7x24 Production Support subscription with IONA.

Results

Within two weeks of modeling the application in Visio, The Company— with guidance from IONA—had a working system. The system was built using FUSE ESB without writing any code; the integration was implemented with XML property and configuration files.

The time to market for the e-appointments application was so short that the Company launched an ambitious rollout schedule that brings a new warehouse online every six weeks.

Model of system using Enterprise Integration Patterns

Why IONA

- **Enterprise-class support**—responsive and knowledgeable support staff with a track record of making Global 2000 mission-critical applications successful

- **From vision to application quickly**—the combination of having a standard method of notation (EIPs) and FUSE's implementation cut development time to two weeks

- **No vendor lock-in**—FUSE does not present a steep learning curve or impose a development paradigm so even the mainframe team was comfortable with the tool

- **Flexible infrastructure**—could integrate with diverse third party and legacy systems without requiring custom modules from the vendor

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