

Shea Homes Opens the Door to AS/400 Applications

Verastream Host Integrator helps integrate J.D. Edwards and BizTalk



QUICK VIEW

Problem

Needed to improve operational consistency by integrating disparate systems.

Solution

Used Verastream to let J.D. Edwards application (running on AS/400) interact with Microsoft BizTalk Server and other enterprise applications.

Results

- Data accuracy ensured by exposing validation routines.
- 20 to 30 integration processes, involving up to eight applications, created in about six months.
- Real-time data store that allows for more effective business decisions.
- Improved bottom line via better management of inventory, pricing, and cash flow.

Shea Homes has built more than 52,000 houses across the U.S. since 1968. Its parent organization is J.F. Shea Company, whose construction portfolio includes the Golden Gate Bridge and the Hoover Dam.

Inspecting the Foundation

Shea Homes, which uses J.D. Edwards Homebuilder Management as its core system, has six business divisions. Historically, the divisions operated independently and as a result, they built their IT systems independently. Because management had to deal with six different application architectures, it was difficult to make informed or timely decisions. Here are some specific problems Shea Homes wanted to solve:

- Sales information, which was batch-processed only once a week at the corporate office, would quickly become outdated.
- Even current information could be unreliable, due to a clear separation between reporting and transactional systems.
- Integration routines written against the J.D. Edwards database layer were costly to build and hard to maintain.
- Data anomalies could result from integration routines that bypassed the validation logic provided by the application layer.

Time for a Remodel

To improve operational consistency, J.F. Shea centralized IT and created a project to recast the application-integration architecture. Their goal was an integration framework that would coordinate timing and accuracy of data across all applications, especially J.D. Edwards Homebuilder. This

framework would allow for the creation of a real-time operational data store to support corporate decision making.

The J.D. Edwards software ran on a single IBM AS/400 (Series i) server at the Shea Homes data center, where information systems for the whole company were centralized. Microsoft BizTalk Server connected the division's enterprise systems, but key data and business logic remained locked in the AS/400.

IT was tasked with building the comprehensive integration architecture for J.F. Shea Company, using the six Shea Homes divisions as a working paradigm. The first step was to eliminate data discrepancies by getting everybody to use the same systems.

Blueprint for Success

Attachmate® Verastream® Host Integrator provided a semantic layer for the J.D. Edwards environment. Developers were able to create models and expose them as web services, so the J.D. Edwards application could interact with BizTalk and the other enterprise applications.

With Verastream Host Integrator, you get rapid results because you can use existing development skills, familiar IT tools, and

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– Mike Little
Senior Technical Manager
Shea Homes

proven mainframe investments. Whether your environment is IBM Series z (zSeries, S/390), IBM Series i (iSeries, AS/400), UNIX, OpenVMS, or HP e3000, Verastream can give your users a new look and feel, without disturbing mainframe-application code or associated business processes.

IT management at Shea Homes thought it would take up to a month to build the models, but developers using Verastream Host Integrator were actually able to create and deploy the models in three or four days.

- **Risk reduction.** Shea Homes continues to benefit from the stability of the solutions they create with Verastream. “We’re processing up to 50,000 transactions a day,” said Little, “and Verastream doesn’t even blink. It just chugs all day long.”
- **Component reuse.** Shea Homes can reuse Verastream-created web services for other solutions. For example, the same service that encapsulates functionality for a sales application can later be used in an accounting spreadsheet application.

New Toolbox Opens New Possibilities

Shea Homes developers were accustomed to doing integration the “old way” for many years; they were convinced that hand coding was the best method. “We had to drag them kicking and screaming to Verastream,” said Mike Little, senior technical manager. “Now they’re constantly coming up with new ideas for applications based on Verastream.”

While Shea Homes originally used Verastream solely as an adapter for BizTalk, they soon discovered how Verastream could help them expose a variety of J.D. Edwards functionality. For example, they’ve started building a services layer around J.D. Edwards, so other applications can dynamically validate data before it’s integrated.

And because Verastream has made legacy information easily available, the value of the J.D. Edwards application has substantially risen. “This ability extends J.D. Edwards past the back office, getting it in the hands of the users,” said Little.

Nailing it Down

The Verastream solution helped Shea Homes in a number of ways:

- **Elimination of errors.** Shea Homes can now ensure accuracy of data by exposing validation routines and catching errors before they are released. “Verastream shines a big spotlight to show us where processes are broken,” Little said.
- **Modernized processes.** Shea Homes is changing business processes across the company, from the accounting office to the field. With Verastream, they created 20 to 30 integration processes, involving up to eight applications, in about six months.
- **Real-time data store.** Verastream has helped Shea Homes employees access real-time information from its J.D. Edwards application. With batch processing eliminated, information can be centralized in an operational data store that allows for more effective business decisions.
- **Improved bottom line.** Integrated information is now available from the entire enterprise, including back-end systems. Shea Homes is already starting to save money via better management of their inventory, pricing, and cash flow.

“We can usually do a lot more with a component once it’s created.” Little said. “Every time we turn around, another opportunity comes up, because we have this working foundation, thanks to Verastream.”

About Verastream Integration Solutions

The Attachmate Verastream product line accelerates the reuse of legacy applications in service-oriented architectures. This suite of solutions provides a complete range of mainframe, web, and desktop modernization tools—from basic rejuvenation to customized presentation and sophisticated high-performance integration.

Verastream-generated services can be mixed, matched, and reused selectively to extend legacy functionality to new users or new composite applications. No code changes to legacy applications are required, so you can avoid risk while speeding up application integration, application development, and workflow enhancement.

About Attachmate

Attachmate helps businesses extend, manage, and secure their IT investments. We offer a broad range of solutions—from terminal emulation, legacy integration, and PC lifecycle management products to innovative systems and security management tools. With our technology, more than 65,000 businesses worldwide are putting their IT assets to work in new and meaningful ways. Learn more at www.attachmate.com.



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