

Online Information System for Inventory Data

# eQuestor at Rheinland Versicherings AG

By Inken Erlenkeuser

*Browser access to mainframe computers and Oracle – the success story of ApplinX*

Older mainframe applications are being increasingly integrated into modern IT structures. Electronic business is turning the thin client into a strategy nowadays, e.g. customer service is enhanced by internet applications, and field agents get comprehensive support via the web. However, the increasingly expanding company structures with heterogeneous IT environments and high amounts of investment are posing a

problem. Integration and modernization measures safeguard this type of investment. The existing legacy applications can be maintained as back-end systems while a server manages the new front-ends and displays data from different sources.

Rheinland Versicherings AG, an insurance company in Neuss, realized together with MaK Data System such a projekt with the “eQuestor” system.

## **Rheinland Versicherings AG**

For over a hundred years, Rheinland Versicherings AG offers services and reliability for all insurance matters not only for private but also commercial customers. It originated from the Feuerversicherungs-Gesellschaft (Fire Insurance Company) which was founded in 1880. Today its name stands for innovative insurance solu-

Foto: Rheinland Versicherung



tions for specific target groups in all walks of life.

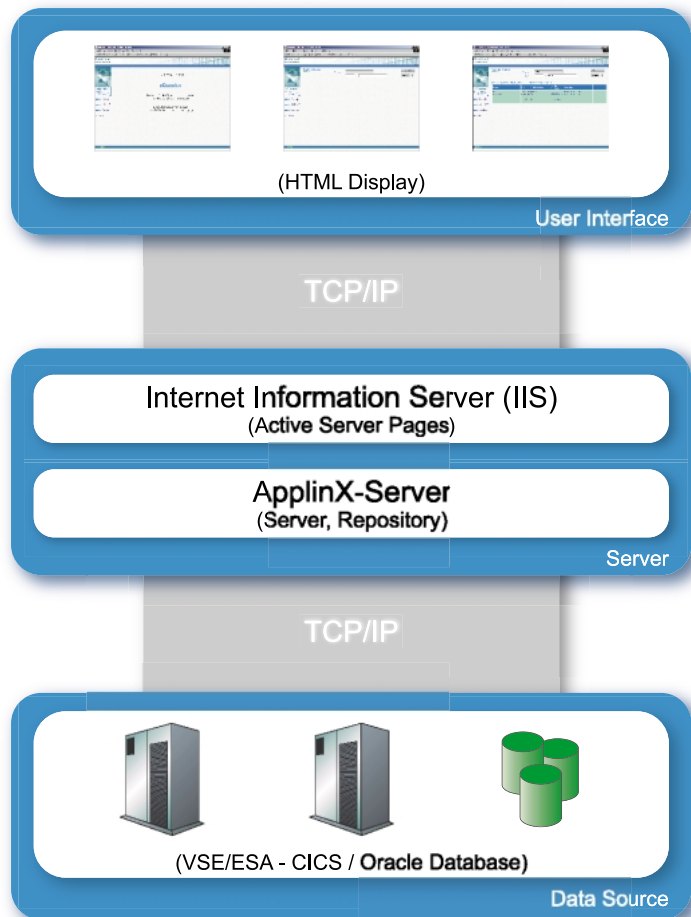
As a medium-sized organization, the Rheinland Versicherung group offers a tight net of on-site customer service. Here, customers find individual and comprehensive support and service regarding all insurance matters.

### ”eQuestor”

Rheinland Versicherung was looking for a comprehensive software solution which would enable its agents in the field to directly access the contract details of clients which would consequently result in a quicker information service. Their goal was to achieve an integrated presentation of the existing data located on various data management systems (VSAM, DL/I, Oracle databases) using a Web surface.

ApplinX was the solution that MaK Data System presented and which Erich Pfeifer successfully introduced to the staff of the Rheinland Versicherung group as a new online information system for inventory data, “eQuestor”. Mr. Pfeifer, head of the Information Technology department, and his team succeeded in developing the eQuestor in two months.

In the past, information concerning Rheinland policies had to be obtained from the agencies by telephone. With eQuestor, it is possible to ascertain this information over an Internet



Structure of eQuestor

browser. The data sources are two mainframe systems with various Cics transactions (Customer Information Control Systems) as well as an Oracle database. “The conversion of this information service from a telephoning system to an integrated intranet solution using ApplinX will considerably speed up the inquiries from its 1,500 clients”, says Mr. Pfeifer.

### Operating Procedure

The eQuestor is started directly or via a link in a browser. On the start-up screen, the choice can be made between a search for client, for registration number or for a contract number. The corresponding fields for the given entry then open. These are confirmed by clicking a “search” or “new search” button. After a short waiting time, during which the information search

takes place, the requested records are displayed according to the search criteria.

### Software Concept

The software solution for eQuestor is divided into 3 categories,

- the display area (dynamically created html pages)
- the transaction control (server) and
- the data sources (mainframe applications, Oracle database)

The core part of the application is the transaction control, which consists of the Web server and the ApplinX server. The Internet Information Server (IIS) was chosen to be the Web server. It controls the display of the Active Server Pages (ASP) for the user.

# Integration of the Old and New World: Proven Strengths – New Developments

## Technical Data eQuestor

Data basis:

Host:  
VSE/ESA Version 2.3  
Cics Version 2.3.0

Oracle-DB Version 7.3.4

Network infrastructure:

TCP/IP Version 1.3.0  
SQL.Net Version 8.0.5

Server:

Windows 2000 Server

ApplinX Server Vers. 2.3.0

Webserver IIS 5.0

ASP-pages in Html, CSS,  
VBScript, JavaScript, XML

Client:

Internet Explorer 5.5  
Netscape Communicator 4.7

ApplinX controls the mainframe applications.

Every ASP page is linked to the ApplinX-Server via a central module. In addition, the ASP pages have an access control link to the Oracle database.

Navigation paths can be localized in the central module, in order to prevent all the mainframe masks of the Cics transaction from being displayed after a search request. These navigation paths are needed by the control system of the mainframe application. They run on the ApplinX server and can store any data from individual host masks.

For example, if all contracts for the client "Mr. Smith" are to be shown, the ASP page responsible for displaying the information, first searches the mainframe computer for all information regarding "Mr. Smith". Only when the navigation path, which is called up for this purpose, sends back the message "finished", will the ASP page appear, displaying the information (collected on the mainframe computer). Access to the Oracle database is dealt with in exactly the same way. Both of these accessing methods are performed before the actual pages are displayed on the server. However, the user only sees the end result, an html page.

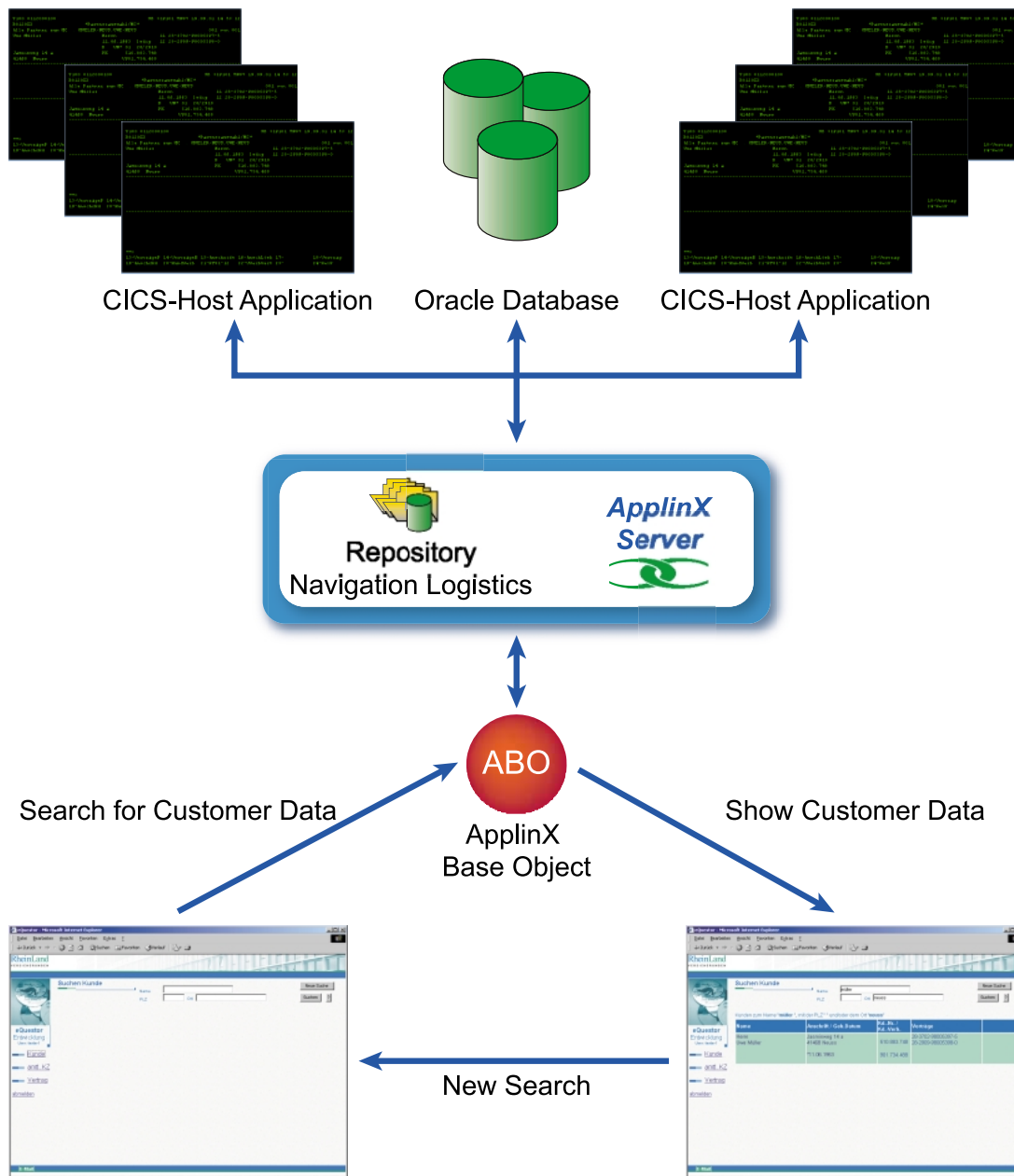
## Integration Tool ApplinX

Sabratec ApplinX is a server-based software solution which enables old applications from mainframe computers, their transactions and elements to be used in a new way. This requires no alteration of the mainframe applications in order to do this. Furthermore, external resources, e.g. additional databases or external processes can be incorporated.

The ApplinX server supports pure Java solution platforms, such as Solaris, RS/6000, Windows 2000, Linux, AS/400 among others. At present, the host systems IBM, OS/390, AS-400 Unix VT, Unisys, Hitachi, Fujitsu are also supported.

The individual pages of the mainframe applications can be displayed in a 1:1 mode without the need for re-development or special configuration "on the fly". The design is created by so-called templates. Furthermore, any number of individual pages can be generated by a 'composer', for example, in order to produce pages with particular functions or a special design. Administration, control and development are accomplished through a server-based control panel. All data is presented using common Internet technologies, such as html, ASP, JSP, Java, WAP, Servlets, ActiveX and XML.

The administration of the navigation paths (i.e. the server-based background control of the host application) is carried out in the repository. The ApplinX Base Object provides general functions. Newly developed application functions can be integrated



*Inquiry structure of the eQuestor*

into the existing application via the ApplinX Composite Objects.

### Summary

eQuestor is a classic example of the integration of the old and new world. The portfolio protection of the present mainframe computer systems as well as the application of Thin Client solutions for the front-end not only safeguards the IT business but rather op-

timizes complete business processes, such as inquiries about products and services at Rheinland Versicherung. Erich Pfeifer describes the advantages: "Due to eQuestor, we are in the position to provide agents in the field with a web-based platform containing up-to-date and homogeneous information - independent of the progress reached in the development of the large in-house systems". ■

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