

HiT Touts Real World Work of IBM i Data Provider

by Alex Woodie

Looking to avoid the time and expense of connecting System i and Windows .NET systems by hand, two System i shops in the transportation business, Seaboard Marine and Morgan Corporation, have utilized a HiT Software data provider called Ritmo to do the heavy lifting for them, the software company announced last week.

It can be a tricky thing to write and debug a Windows .NET application that utilizes DB2 for i (DB2/400) data, according to HiT Software. Unless you have oodles of System i database experience and plenty of time allotted to the exercise, it can end up consuming more resources than you were initially prepared to give up, especially if you're more heavily invested in Windows skills.

That is HiT's basic sales pitch for Ritmo, a managed data provider for Microsoft Visual Studio. The software, which sits between a DB2/400 database and a .NET application, accepts SQL commands from the requesting application, translates them into native DB2/400 requests, and then feeds the resulting data back into the Windows application--allowing .NET programmers to get low-level control of DB2/400 from the comfort of a mouse-driven, drag-and-drop environment.

Keeping the development cycle on track was a key consideration in Seaboard Marine's purchase of the .NET middleware. The company, which operates 40 vessels and a private 80-acre terminal at the Port of Miami, is one of the largest ocean transportation companies serving the Caribbean Sea. It also relies heavily on a mix of IBM System i and Microsoft Windows server technologies to operate its business. The use of the Ritmo data provider has taken some kinks out of manually integrating DB2/400 and .NET technology, says Luis Barahona, the company's senior programmer.

"This toolkit has significantly helped reduce the amount of time and effort required to develop our .NET applications, debug, and manage them," Barahona says. "Going through those steps could take a programmer a lot of effort--with the C# Toolkit, we can do it in minutes."

Timely development of System i-to-Windows connections was also a concern for Morgan Corp., one of the country's largest manufacturers of dry freight and refrigerated truck bodies. In 2006, Morgan was building a company Web portal that would reside on a Windows Server platform, and would tap into data residing on DB2/400.

The company needed the fastest connection possible, and Ritmo was selected for the job by Tavilo, a business intelligence software provider and systems integrator. Ritmo worked right out of the box and was simple for us to OEM," says Tavilo CEO Michael Gilbert. "I have yet to find faster .NET middleware for the IBM i."