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ViewStar snags huge FileNet account

23,000 seat workflow installation "biggest in history"

By Dan Bolita

Kudos to ViewStar (Alameda, CA) for focusing on the ultimate purpose of the AIIM show—generating business. Dramatic, star-studded (all right, James Drury, the Virginian) booths, parodies of '60s sitcoms and jazzy after-show parties are all nice, but if the point is to win customers, ViewStar came away with the biggest prize.

Halifax Building Society (London)—"like a savings and loan, only profitable"—is Britain's largest mutual bank, and a former FileNet (Costa Mesa, CA) customer. It has chosen ViewStar to provide a 23,000-seat enterprisewide workflow system. Dick Spellman, director of distribution at Halifax, estimated the cost of the project at £90 million over then next two years.

The announcement was made jointly with Microsoft (Redmond, WA), whose NT platform has been chosen for both the client and the server. Davide Vigano, director of emerging markets with Microsoft, said, "This is more proof that the NT base is solid and thriving."

Halifax based its decision on the successful implementation of a ViewStar workflow application at the Halifax Call Center operation. This 700-seat operation handles thousands of postal and telephone loan and account inquiries daily.

The award indicates that the market for large workflow solutions is opening up. Sharish Hardikar, VP of marketing with ViewStar, called the agreement "an evolution in the workflow industry and adoption of workflow technology."

Wang's (Billerica, MA) Ellen Rome agreed, "I think it's great; people are deploying enterprise workflow solutions."

Commenting on the deal, Jordan Libit, FileNet's VP of marketing, speculated that this may be a challenging contract for ViewStar to service. "Historically, ViewStar has not been as strong in the United Kingdom as in the United States., but we'll just have to see."

Hardikar seemed prepared to defend that charge. Without giving specifics, the VP claimed that "the past nine months have been the best in ViewStar's history."

Success may lie in the fact that the installation will be phased in over an extended period. Said Vigano, "Roll out is expected to take five years for the entire operation."

ViewStar can expect help from its NT partner. "Microsoft expects to give a very, very articulated level of support," said Vigano.

According to Microsoft, ViewStar provides the market's greatest array of workflow options for Windows NT.

Halifax will be using ViewStar to process all of its mortgage loans beginning with the initial credit application and ending with the funding papers. The mortgage processing application will be the first of as many as 30 business processes to be automated at Halifax. Other applications will include investment and insurance services.

In an obvious reference to its failed merger with Caere (Los Gatos, CA), Hardikar prefaced the announcement with the quip, "This is not a lawsuit settlement."

Both Libit and Rome felt the contract was won due to ViewStar's existing Call Center installation as opposed to an extensive, competitive selection process.

Gail Crowe, senior VP of worldwide operations with ViewStar, called the deal the "largest workflow deal ever closed." She went on to say, "Two to three years ago, no one believed in NT as a viable solution." ◆

ViewStar

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