



Vista Healthplan Streamlines Claims Processing and Improves Member Services with Mainframe SOA Solution

Shadow z/Services Distributed Accelerates Service-Enablement of Legacy Screen-Based Applications

Customer Profile

Headquartered in Hollywood, Florida, Vista and its affiliated companies offer a choice of health benefit plans including health maintenance organization (HMO), preferred provider organization (PPO) and point-of-service (POS). Vista provides health benefits coverage to more than 300,000 members and 10,000 employers in Florida through employer group and individual plans, Medicare, Medicaid and Florida's Healthy Kids program. In addition, more than 5,000 independent physicians and the area's leading hospitals participate in Vista's provider network.

Understanding the Business Challenge

Vista's claims staff faced an extremely repetitive and lengthy process when modifying coverage details for its customers. Utilizing legacy equipment including the IBM AS/400, the claims personnel often had to enter data twice: once into its front-end business application and then again in its primary iSeries application PowerMHS. This had significant negative impact on the efficiency of business workflows and quality of service for plan members.

Integrating their front-end applications with PowerMHS was difficult primarily due to the proprietary nature of PowerMHS and its database. The business logic used to relate the underlying tables resides in PowerMHS's COBOL generated "green" screens. Vista could access the iSeries based tables directly, but to do so would require staff to replicate the business logic already built within the PowerMHS system.

Vista's extensive customer base also means that it processes claims for hundreds of thousands of customers annually. Vista's partners require real time access to their records to reach an acceptable level of agility to respond to member requests. In the past, partners seeking reports had to wait up to 2 weeks as staff members sought information on the mainframe, printed requested materials and then mailed the hard copies.

Choosing the Right Solution

Vista identified four key requirements for the new technology: fast application development, minimal staff skill set prerequisites, scalability and cost savings. Based on these needs, Vista quickly ruled out host integration services as a possible solution since the cost of a possible implementation was prohibitive.

Working with these requirements, Vista chose to create a Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) using NEON Systems' Shadow z/Services Distributed. Based upon the Microsoft .NET Framework 1.1., Shadow z/Services Distributed works seamlessly within Vista's .NET, COBOL and Java environment.

Shadow z/Services Distributed also did not require developers to have particular skill sets and a deep understanding of the AS/400 and .NET world to install the technology. Therefore Vista knew that it could count on a quick installation that would later be overseen on a daily basis with minimal staff support. This also meant a cost savings on the technical support and installation side of the implementation.

"Claims are the most important component of this implementation. Vista pays or denies claims based on decisions that begin with accessing these applications. We also use Shadow z/Services to aid in business planning and accessing membership status information in real time. With NEON Systems, we have created a parallel to an ERP for healthcare."

Jose Contreras
Vice President of
Information Technology
Vista Healthplan

Realizing the Benefits

COBOL, .NET and Java developers are leaving behind the old concept of mainframe application coding, and instead they are becoming an integration shop using .NET and Java components. Later Vista will fully exploit Shadow z/Services Distributed's Web services capabilities as building blocks toward deploying a full SOA.



NEON's Shadow z/Services Distributed also gave Vista direct access to its IBM AS/400 mainframes and then into a host environment that generates components into critical applications that are ultimately exposed to the end user. The newly architected solution has significantly improved the operational efficiencies, streamlining the access to legacy data and reducing the amount of time needed to handle member inquiries and plan updates. Customers can now access their employee's eligibility and status via a partner Web interface rather than waiting weeks for mailed reports.

Jose Contreras, vice president of information technology at Vista Healthplan, has seen a measurable increase in membership loyalty and customer satisfaction rates. This is a direct result of Vista partners now being able to access data in real time. "The ability to provide membership data to our customers in real time has always been a key directive at Vista. Now that we have reduced the waiting period that followed membership inquiries, our customers can service their members quickly and in turn increase member loyalty. It's pretty hard to put an ROI on it, but it is critical."

While access to information is critical to Vista's customers, the company must also assure the government and its users that all stored and transferred information is secure and meets HIPAA mandates for patient records confidentiality. Vista leverages the AS/400's security and reinforces those protocols using Shadow z/Services Distributed.

Looking ahead, Vista will be using NEON's Shadow z/Services Distributed as its foundation for a broader, Web services-based SOA implementation, which includes converting their use of components to SOAP-based Web services that will allow them to continue to offer secure, online services with additional features. Vista plans to augment the capabilities it currently offers to its partners with direct member access. In the future, Vista will offer member enrollments, direct access to accounts and self-service features to enable members to modify their information - all of which will capture significant ROI for Vista.

Mainframe Integration ROI

As an example of the lengthy and repetitive process faced by Vista's claims staff, the renewal process for small group customers took two full-time employees an average of 120 hours each month to manually key and audit relevant data. This left room for human error in data entry. With the introduction of NEON's Shadow z/Services Distributed, one full-time employee now completes the upload and auditing process with increased accuracy in one day, making the total time saved annually following the NEON installation over 1,300 man hours on average. Factoring in an annual full-time employee salary of \$28,000, cost savings on this project are approximately \$18,000.

"This implementation is invaluable. Our customer satisfaction rates have grown significantly because of the presence of this technological innovation. They love it. They want more."

Jose Contreras
Vice President of Information
Technology
Vista Healthplan

About NEON Systems

NEON Systems, Inc. (Nasdaq:NEON) -- the Mainframe Integration Experts -- is a leading provider of enterprise-class mainframe integration solutions, delivering the only unified mainframe integration platform to support the entire range of requirements for Service-Oriented Architectures (SOA) and Event-Driven Architectures (EDA) -- key requirements to underpin the Real-time Enterprise. NEON's Shadow technology is designed to reduce the complexity of mainframe integration allowing large organizations with significant commitment to mainframe systems to streamline incumbent technologies and lower total cost of ownership. NEON's Shadow z/Services and Shadow z/Events offerings attack the emerging mainframe Web services and real-time mainframe event-driven markets and are unique in their depth and breadth of support for the requirements of such markets. With extensive mainframe integration expertise, NEON is uniquely qualified to solve the complexities of supporting new business initiatives that must integrate with critical mainframe systems. For more information on the Powering the Real-time Enterprise, see our Web site at <http://www.neonsys.com> or call 800-505-NEON.

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