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APPLICATION STUDY

Insurer Finds Security in M.I.S. Print Capabilities and RSA Support

Rochester Software Associates, Inc.

69 Cascade Drive
Rochester, New York
14614

Main 585.262.2690
Fax 585.262.4808
E-mail RSAinfo@rocsoft.com
Web www.rocsoft.com



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Karl Radke
Operations Specialist
Berkshire Life

Think of it as a technological safety net. When Berkshire Life Insurance Company and The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America announced their pending merger in September of 2000, the decision was made to upgrade printing systems. They needed a solution that would consolidate the different printing systems each company had employed over the years and meet their growing printing requirements. Also on the agenda was an effective disaster recovery plan for this new equipment.

Founded in 1851, Berkshire Life was the twelfth-oldest mutual life insurer in the United States. Located in a region of Massachusetts known as the Berkshires, it had over 140,000 policyholders. In July of 2001, Berkshire Life and New York City-based Guardian announced the completion of their merger. Berkshire Life Insurance Company of America (BLICOA), the new wholly owned subsidiary of Guardian, became responsible for all individual disability income insurance products for the merged companies.

Prior to the merger, Berkshire Life relied on one LPS printer to handle the printing of all their legacy applications including policies and billing statements. After eleven years and four hard drives filled to capacity, it was time to upgrade this aging equipment with a faster and more efficient printer.

Berkshire Life evaluated two competitive print vendors, both of whom proposed RSA's M.I.S. Print software for LCDS data stream conversion to PostScript. The common thread was RSA.

The winning solution was a new production printer, enabled with M.I.S. Print co-resident on the printer controller. Karl Radke, operations specialist for Berkshire Life, was impressed with the RSA solution.

Merging companies, Merging documents

"But this wasn't just about changing machines; we had problems to solve. Following the merger, changes needed to be made," says Radke.

"We had 3,000 new forms from Guardian in addition to the existing 5,000 ones from Berkshire Life, a new company name, and deadlines coming out of our ears," he continues "We had less than five weeks to remove the old printer, get the new printer and software installed, complete RSA training, and make sure over 8,000 forms were in conformance. It was as though RSA needed to perform two installs in one making sure the forms from both Guardian and Berkshire Life printed perfectly."

"The first challenge was to get both sets of forms to RSA. While trying to back up all the forms, the tape drive died." Radke continues, "I had to send the (28) 9 track round tapes to RSA to be transferred to CD's that could be read by the new printer. Unfortunately, some tapes had read errors on them, so I pulled the missing pieces together and resent ten new tapes. What's impressive is that no forms were ever lost or damaged by RSA."

"The new printer arrived on May 15 so I had a very short turnaround time to see that the new solution was fully installed and in production. All the jobs needed to be running smoothly on the new printer by June 30th. Shortly after starting the project, the deadline was adjusted to June 20th due to testing requirements in another department. It was critical that we finished everything on time. And we did. We beat the deadline, completing everything by June 19th."

RSA's M.I.S. Print is an integrated solution running on the print controller of the channel-attached printer. M.I.S. Print receives the LCDS data streams from the host and automatically converts the data to PostScript, without requiring program or job process changes. Because M.I.S. Print can process these jobs between 1,000 and 10,000 ppm, the DP 96 prints at rated speed, averaging 600,000 pages per month. M.I.S. Print also uses existing printer resources such as JSL, FSL, LGO, IMG and FNT in order to support the

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customer's prior investments in forms, job set-ups, fonts, logos, etc. In addition to printing the legacy mainframe jobs, Berkshire Life now has the added flexibility to print network jobs simultaneously.

Getting the job done right

According to Radke, "The benefits of the new solution have been significant. The most valuable feature of the M.I.S. Print software is the reprint capability. Prior to RSA, we could only back up 3 days of jobs before hard drives would max out. This was due to the sheer volume of jobs at Berkshire Life. It was not a reliable solution because 4 or 5 days after a job would run, we would have to reprint a job. Since only the last 3 days of jobs were stored we frequently had to send the job down again from the mainframe. Occasionally, there would be a 1-3 day delay before we could deliver a job if we needed to get tapes from the offsite storage facility in order to run the job. It also involved two people to do these restores.

Thanks to M.I.S. Print, that's all in the past. We chose to have M.I.S. Print's job archive set to retain jobs for 7 days. I have the flexibility to adjust the default number of days for any length of time. Additionally, I even have the ability to move it up in the future to meet my needs. It is easy to reprint a portion or all of a job, without delays and reprocessing at the mainframe. We use it quite a bit and it's a real time saver."

And possibly a lifesaver

"After the tragedy of September 11th, we realized how important it was to implement a disaster recovery plan that worked" says Radke. "Since 1992 there has been a disaster recovery plan in place at Berkshire Life, but the process was time consuming and the tapes were bulky to carry back and forth to the offsite storage facility each month. We also had two different types of media for back up— 9 track round tape and 5 1/4" floppy disk."

"To address this concern, we now have one desktop and a separate RSA Sun based Channel Server installed with M.I.S. Print at a disaster recovery site in New Jersey. Now, I simply bring 4mm tape cartridges to the site and testing is conducted twice a year. All of our system backup is conveniently stored on two cartridges, which fit right in my shirt pocket. This new technology enabled us to shave a half hour off the backup process. The best part, in over a year I've needed to do zero restores thanks to RSA's reprint capabilities. That has been a major cost savings. We have eliminated the need to have two people do these restores each time. RSA's solution is absolutely gorgeous. It saves time, money and manpower." Radke continues, "RSA is the only team that stayed with me through our disaster recovery implementation—whatever it took to get the job done."

"At RSA, Mike Baker worked with us diligently and achieved 100% production. Production included not only conformance of jobs, but also extensive training conducted by Gayle Shalvoy from RSA. Gayle made herself available to fit my schedule, both during first and second shifts. Even after training, she was always available to answer my questions. The support from RSA has been above and beyond my expectations. It's been a pleasure working with such a talented team."

"The transition was also fast and involved a minimal number of process changes on our end. Thanks to RSA, I was able to beat the deadline. I also received internal recognition for my accomplishments, including a Bravo Award. Completing the project ahead of schedule wouldn't have happened without the team effort by RSA."

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