



Overview

Country or Region: New Zealand

Industry: Financial Services

Customer Profile

ASB Group Investments is an operating unit of ASB, a financial services company based in Auckland, New Zealand.

Business Situation

A government initiative to spur retirement savings required ASB to seek a technology that would allow it to become an important institutional participant in the savings program.

Solution

ASB Group Investments deployed Microsoft BizTalk® Server 2006 R2 for its new and enhanced features, including support for a government-mandated protocol.

Benefits

- Solution helps meet critical project deadline
- Tools help monitor financial transactions
- Technology provides platform for the future

Financial Services Company Uses Integration Technology for Workplace Savings Program

“BizTalk Server 2006 R2 is not just a point solution for the KiwiSaver program. It is a long-term capability that can help our business.”

Robert Maher, Team Leader of the Middleware Stream, Strategy and Architecture, ASB Technology Solutions, ASB

When the New Zealand government announced its KiwiSaver program to encourage citizens to save more money for their retirement, ASB Group Investments had a great opportunity—and a significant challenge. As one of six companies chosen to be “default providers” for the program, the initiative presented a huge potential influx of business. But ASB Group Investments also had to quickly find a technology solution that could help integrate its system with the national program to enable the efficient transfer of funds and contributor account information. ASB Group Investments accomplished its objective by deploying Microsoft® BizTalk® Server 2006 R2, using new and enhanced features, including support for AS2, a government-mandated protocol. The solution provided improved monitoring tools that help company IT staff identify and resolve problems that arise during the processing of contributions.

“BizTalk Server 2006 R2 allowed us to get past the cost hurdle by allowing the IT department to demonstrate to our management the value of creating an integrated solution from different kinds of systems and applications.”

Chris Robb, Practice Manager of Shared Services, ASB Technology Solutions, ASB

Situation

ASB Group Investments is a division of ASB, a full-service financial services company in New Zealand that offers products and services including retail, business and rural banking securities, managed funds, insurances and retirement products. ASB Group Investments has approximately NZ\$5.5 billion (U.S.\$4 billion) in assets that it manages for its clients.

In April 2007, the New Zealand government, after years of debate and legislative efforts, finally launched a voluntary retirement savings initiative designed to spur more savings by the nation's citizens. Known as the KiwiSaver program, this national program directly affects ASB Group Investments and other financial services organizations. The program—in which people contribute funds to retirement accounts through their place of work—got off to a rapid start due to a combination of incentives, including tax savings for individuals who contribute, employer contributions and up to a NZ\$1,000 start up incentive government contribution for every person who participates in the KiwiSaver program.

During the preparation period before the launch of the program, ASB Group Investments was selected as one of six national “default providers.” These are financial services companies that will be randomly selected to receive, hold, and manage an individual's retirement funds if that individual does not select a specific company to manage his or her money.

The challenge for ASB Group Investments was that the Inland Revenue Department, the country's tax agency, had decided to standardize on the Applicability Statement 2 (AS2), a specification for securely transporting data, including Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) messages, over the Internet.

“AS2 was the protocol that Inland Revenue wanted to use, but it was a brand-new standard for most companies in New Zealand,” says Robert Maher, Team Leader of the Middleware Stream for the Strategy and Architecture group at ASB Technology Solutions, the IT department for the parent corporation. He explains that the tax agency had chosen the AS2 standard because it would provide a mechanism for effectively handling two separate components of a person's retirement-fund contribution: the “message” containing notification of the contribution, and the actual movement of funds between accounts and institutions.

“We had to do a lot of planning to prepare for this, and early on began work on a solutions-oriented IT architecture that would allow us to incorporate the AS2 requirement,” Maher says. “However, when evaluating our options, we had to rule out developing a solution internally—it would have been too time-consuming and expensive.”

He says the IT team working on the solution was also not satisfied with third-party solutions like SeeBeyond, webMethods, and Tibco. “The quality was inconsistent, and we could not find a product that could do what we wanted in terms of integrating tightly into our IT architecture.”

Solution

ASB Group Investments found the solution that it needed by deploying Microsoft® BizTalk® Server 2006 R2, an update to the BizTalk Server 2006 software that includes many new features. Key among these for ASB Group Investments are integrated support for the AS2 protocol and expanded Business Activity Monitoring (BAM) that includes interceptors—programming objects used to capture and route specific data—for the Windows® Communication Foundation (WCF).

“Had we not chosen BizTalk Server 2006 R2, the risk would have been massive.”

Chris Robb, Practice Manager of Share Services, ASB Technology Solutions, ASB

WCF provides a unified programming model for building service-oriented applications. The BAM functionality can capture key performance indicators and other data. The company uses BAM to reconcile the financial totals of all contributions against a batch total received daily. This reconciliation process also matches the money transferred to the ASB account. ASB uses WCF as a core part of its strategy of building a service-oriented IT framework.

ASB Group Investments began development of its new solution in mid-2006. The company began rolling out the solution in early October 2007 as the KiwiSaver program went live, with the system handling up to 100 megabytes of messages daily. BizTalk Server 2006 R2 is part of a system that also includes a fund registry system and a banking mainframe computer from Unisys.

The solution is deployed on a clustered storage-area network. ASB Group Investments anticipates that the system can easily scale to large volumes.

Benefits

ASB Group Investments achieved several benefits by deploying Microsoft BizTalk Server 2006 R2. The company was able to meet a critical business deadline for participating in a nationwide program that is going to attract new customers. BizTalk Server 2006 R2 provides management tools that make it easy for ASB Group Investments to monitor the movement of contributions. And by deploying BizTalk Server 2006 R2, the company has implemented technology that is providing a platform for future solutions and growth.

Solution Helps Meet Critical Project Deadline

By choosing to deploy BizTalk Server 2006 R2, ASB Group Investments was able to meet a critical business objective—having a solution up and ready in time to participate in a government-sponsored national program.

“When working with the government and its timelines, there was really no room for movement in terms of flexibility of the deadline for deploying a solution,” says Chris Robb, Practice Manager of Shared Services for the ASB Technology Solutions group. “Had we not chosen BizTalk Server 2006 R2, the risk would have been massive. Using some other solution would have required time-consuming custom coding or testing and integrating other third-party solutions. BizTalk Server 2006 R2 allowed us to easily integrate a technology that supported the government-mandated AS2 protocol within the given time frame. It gave us an enormous advantage in getting our solution to market in time for the government program.”

Tools Help Monitor Transactions

Maher says that the Business Activity Monitoring feature of BizTalk Server 2006 R2 is a key technology that helps ASB Group Investments closely manage the flow of contributions. He says that the enhanced BAM technology makes it easy to configure alerts and profiles of non-BizTalk Server applications, including the ones used in processing KiwiSaver contributions.

“With the use of the new BAM interceptors in BizTalk Server 2006 R2, we can define and track key performance indicators throughout the process of receiving and managing KiwiSaver contributions,” Maher says. “A critical aspect of being an institutional participant in this program is visibility into the process.”

He says the tight integration of BizTalk Server and the other process components delivers excellent visibility into each step of the KiwiSaver contribution process. The company has configured BizTalk Server to send e-mail alerts to IT administrators whenever it detects a problem with a transaction.

“BizTalk Server 2006 R2 delivers a complete, end-to-end view of what is happening, from the time a contribution is sent to when it is received by our fund registry system,” says Maher. “If something goes wrong, we can use the BAM functionality to drill down and find out what happened. This is extremely helpful. Now we have the tools to quickly locate and fix problems.”

Technology Provides Platform for Future

The decision by ASB Group Investments to deploy BizTalk Server 2006 R2 will help

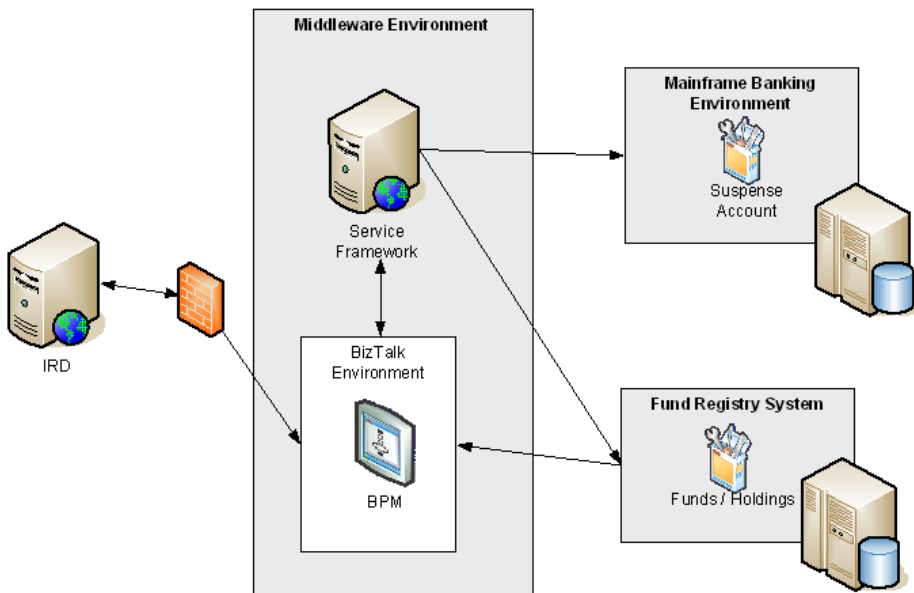
integrated solution from different kinds of systems and applications.”

The company is under constant competitive pressure to enhance its offerings, and internally the pressure is to increase efficiency, deploy new solutions and products, and control costs. BizTalk Server 2006 R2 is now an integral part of that strategy.

“BizTalk Server R2 fits into important IT architectural principles, particularly reusing existing technology while reducing the complexity of systems,” says Robb. “It helps the IT department deliver solutions cheaper and faster and get more reuse out of our older systems. BizTalk Server 2006 R2 helps breathe new life into old applications and can be used as a vehicle for delivering new solutions.”

With the deployment of the KiwiSaver solution, the company is now looking to use BizTalk Server 2006 R2 for other projects.

“We have already identified at least four or five other projects in which we plan to use BizTalk Server 2006 R2,” says Maher. “Going forward, building a solutions-oriented architecture will be very important for our long-term business success. It supports our solutions-oriented objectives and is a core component of that technology strategy. BizTalk Server 2006 R2 is not just a point solution for the KiwiSaver program. It is a long-term capability that can help our business.”



ASB Financial Services uses Microsoft BizTalk Server 2006 R2 to help manage transactions conducted in a national savings program.

deliver benefits over the long term.

“The KiwiSaver program and our response to it was just a first step,” says Robb. “When you consider all the steps that organizations have to go through to deploy a service-oriented architecture, cost is a significant hurdle. BizTalk Server 2006 R2 allowed us to get past the cost hurdle by allowing the IT department to demonstrate to our management the value of creating an

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