



MVON# enabled ABSA to leverage their considerable investment in system development and enhancement over the last two decades and produce an up-to-date system that is fully scalable and runs on industry standard technology.

The ABSA Challenge

Developed over the last 20 years using the Rocket Software (ex-IBM) technologies wIntegrate (terminal emulator and data transfer tool), System Builder & SB+ (Rapid Application Development Tool) and UniVerse (Database Management System) the maturing ABSA fleet management system presented a number of challenges to ABSA. Not only was the system outdated from a user experience perspective the organization was inhibited by the lack of skilled MultiValue application developers and technical support consultants as well as the resultant cost of these resources. Furthermore, the technology limited horizontal system scalability severely affecting system performance and hampering business growth.

MVON# Tools and NetBuilder: The Solution

MVON# Tools and MVON# Netbuilder are products conceptualized and developed by ONgroup Africa (formerly with Pro Solutions) to take System Builder, SB+ & UniVerse applications and transpile them to produce managed code running in the .NET framework. Additionally ONgroup's MVON# is used for converting and populating the data to a choice of database management systems, such as SQL Server, Oracle, or DB2 from UniVerse & UniData. ABSA identified that these products were the solution to their system technology upgrade dilemma.

MVON# enabled ABSA to leverage their considerable investment in system development and enhancement over the last two decades and produce an up-to-date system that is fully scalable and runs on industry standard technology.

In addition to this, the business will continue to benefit from skilled resource availability and the resultant reduction in cost and risk as well as the ability to develop and enhance the application using the latest development tools and technologies.

Benefits Summary

- **Time** to deployment: months vs. years
- Improved **scalability**: vital for the business growth strategy
- Improved **performance**: back-ups, day-ends, months-ends more efficient
- Improved **stability**: system code clean up, scalable technology
- **Skills** availability: skills on current technology scarce and expensive
- **Retained investment in IP** (both system and staff): cost efficiency of at least 10:1
- **Revitalise and re-energise** the team and the business: **priceless**



Approach & Lessons Learned

The approach taken was to ensure a high degree of collaboration between the ABSA team and the ONgroup Africa team from the outset. The project was clearly defined with regards to expected outcomes as well as timeframes.

While the initial conversion took a few weeks, the process highlighted many shortcomings in the aging code. Added to this, the conversion of the System Builder components and the wIntegrate environment added further complexity to the project.

The technical testing and user testing took the most time and effort. A testing process with documented test packs were developed, communicated to the various testing teams responsible for module functionality testing, and executed. The process was subjected to internal banking audit.

The result of the rigorous testing process was a thorough system clean-up which was long overdue as well as a 'hands-on', experiential-based system training exercise for the development team and the business team; many of whom learned more about the system during this process than in years of actually using the system.

Summary

The upgraded system has been in production for 9 months. The system is now stable and completely independent of the legacy MultiValue platform, following some expected issues initially. The ABSA development team is now working on a development plan aimed at migrating the skills base from SB+ to Microsoft in a controlled and managed way.

With the ability to separate the various layers of the technology stack, the database layer can reside in a secure area behind the firewall which allows the business to execute on expansion plans into new territories while adhering to data protection policies in these territories.

Of significant value to the organisation is the ability to execute on a Cloud strategy backed up by true scalability, security and business continuity provided through the Azure platform.

About ABSA

Absa Bank Limited (Absa) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Barclays Africa Group. They offer a range of retail, business, corporate and investment banking, wealth management products and services primarily in South Africa, Namibia and also in Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia

ABSA Bank, a JSE listed organisation, turns over US\$5B annually, has a total asset value of US\$86B and employs 34 000 people.