As a result of increased competition in the financial services marketplace, there is now great pressure to launch new products and services quickly. Many financial services organisations are therefore looking for leading-edge technologies that will provide them with greatly increased flexibility and speed of deployment.

AEGON, a Dutch company that has grown into one of the world’s largest insurance groups, is such an organisation. Following the successful introduction of a banking subsidiary, AEGON recognised the potential for offering savings and investment products across all business units. For this, it needed a completely new information infrastructure.

“Our plan was to set up a financial competence centre – AEGON Bank – which would provide a complete back-office environment, with responsibility for front-office applications and activities staying with the business units,” explained Frans Kasten, ICT manager at AEGON Bank.
Microsoft experience

The only banking application to offer sufficient flexibility to meet AEGON’s needs was a new object-oriented product, ActiveBank e from Financial Objects. Since ActiveBank e had been developed entirely within the Microsoft environment, it was necessary to identify a suitable platform that would support mission-critical operation. The chosen supplier was HP.

“It was not easy to find a stable, reliable hardware supplier who possessed sufficient knowledge and experience of Microsoft technology,” said Kasten. “However, HP was able to offer the complete range of services and it also had a very proactive attitude to partnership.”

Following successful benchmark tests, HP Grenoble was given the responsibility for implementing the new infrastructure, initially at its own site and then at the AEGON site in Leeuwarden. The infrastructure includes a total of 15 HP Netserver systems. These run Windows NT, with a Microsoft SQL Server database and a messaging system built around Microsoft Message Queue and Microsoft Outlook. Sybase’s Impact! middleware is used to move data between back-office and front-office systems.

AEGON outsourced the management of the network and servers to HP. HP monitor the infrastructure remotely from Grenoble using HP OpenView. HP Consulting provides ongoing advice in areas such as security and migration paths.

management ability

According to Kasten, the new environment is fulfilling all expectations. New savings and investment products are being introduced very quickly, in a way that was impossible in the past. This has supported the company’s expansion into the banking area, with savings products being particularly popular with customers.

Because a variety of front-office products are supported by one consistent back-office environment, costs are reduced. Furthermore, HP’s ability to provide an always-on back-office infrastructure supports customer demand for services that can be accessed at any time.

“Despite its complexity, the infrastructure is performing very well. HP is well able to manage business-critical systems within the Microsoft environment. Also, the whole solution is scalable so that we can look forward to the future with confidence,” concluded Kasten.

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challenge

• Compete more effectively by introducing new financial products and services quickly
• Implement a fast, efficient back-office environment that supports mission-critical operation
• Identify the best software, middleware and hardware for the new environment

solution

• Implement object-oriented banking application (ActiveBank e), running on Windows NT
• Implement hp Netserver platform to run application and messaging solution
• Outsource network and server management to hp Grenoble

results

• New savings and investment products are being introduced very quickly
• Costs are less because a variety of front-office products are supported by one consistent back-office environment
• The new environment has supported the company’s expansion into the banking area
• An always-on back-office infrastructure supports customer demand for services that can be accessed at any time

why hp?

• Knowledge of Microsoft environment
• Ability to deliver complete platform to support business-critical activities within this environment
• Proactive attitude to offering new solutions for the market
• Stability and reputation as a supplier

“Despite its complexity, the infrastructure is performing very well. HP is well able to manage business-critical systems within the Microsoft environment. Also, the whole solution is scalable so that we can look forward to the future with confidence.”

Frans Kasten, ICT manager, AEGON Bank
technology highlights:

- Financial Objects’ ActiveBank e
- Microsoft Windows NT 4.0
- Microsoft SQL Server 7.0
- Microsoft Message Queue (MSMQ)
- Microsoft Windows DNA Financial Services
- Sybase’s Impact! message broker
- 3 x hp Netserver LH4 (clustered application servers)
- 2 x hp Netserver LXR 8000 (database servers)
- 2 x hp 9000 D-Class Enterprise Server (firewall servers)
- 7 x hp Netserver LPR (MSMQ, MS Outlook, proxy, and management servers)
- 3 x hp Netserver LH3 (MSMQ and authentication servers)
- Cisco switches and routers
- Remote network and server management by hp Grenoble
- hp OpenView
- Ongoing consultancy services from hp consulting.