Full Commitment in Managed Services

A Look behind the Scenes

By Isabel Braun

A wide variety of reasons lead companies to bring a reliable IT outsourcing service provider on board. Consist is an established partner in this area too, who can offer its customers maximum reliability, relief, and flexibility. Many companies trust Consist when it comes to system development and system operation, error coordination, and service. Here are two typical examples from everyday life with Consist's Managed Services that happened more or less as described.

Night mission

Today is month-end, the last day of the month. For the bank, who offers their customers financing among other things, this is always a particularly important day. Overnight, batch jobs run with data that is updated monthly and then sent to customers as printouts, or forwarded as file transfers to other systems at the bank. These include account statements, interest deductions, new access data and new contracts, the processing of incoming payments and transfers, data extracts into the data warehouse, and so on. The bank has outsourced the development and management of elder technology-based, business-critical application for financing by way of credit to Consist since 2008 to give themselves some space for the change to SAP.

Frank König★ from Consist is on call today 24x7. Together with his team, he specializes in work preparation. He knows that the batch must be successfully completed by no later than 7:00 AM, because that's when the data must be available for the start of dialog operation. At 11:00 PM, Frank König's on-call mobile phone rings. His colleagues at the computer center have found an interrupted job and procedure specifies notification of the responsible on-call technician by telephone.

After a brief check, he quickly sees that this really was a program crash. To correct the error, he informs his colleague in system development, also on-call – this is a separate Consist team, since system operations and system development must be separate for security reasons. Team leader Mirko Schön first analyzes what caused the program to crash. Was false data entered? Was there an incorrect data format passed in from another system? Or were the variables too small for the batch? After all, these

*Names fictitious

photo: Consist

Half of Consist employees are working in teams in Managed Services area, which should be more extended in the next years.

systems have been running for 20 years, and the data volume has grown a lot over that time. In this case, it really is a variable – a counter field – that has gotten too small. After correcting the program and running the tests in the development environment, a special process can be used to move the corrected module into the production environment with a time-limited emergency authorization. Now Frank König can restart the batch at the point of the crash so that after the run succeeds, dialog operation can start at 7:00 AM for the bank's clerks. Hand in hand, the Consist teams involved have once again provided valuable support for the bank's monthly batch run.

10 in the morning in Frankfurt

Scene change: Somewhere in Germany, a bank consultant is trying to prepare a financing offer for the interested man sitting at his desk. He enters the data into the Web-based application developed by an external software manufacturer for the bank, which has been running for years throughout Germany in all the bank offices.

An error occurs. The loan request isn't answered. The salesman immediately contacts the software manufacturer to report the problem. They can carry out an initial error analysis, but they intentionally have no access to production and so they inform the bank of the problem.

Years ago, the bank also entrusted system operations for the application to Consist – in addition to its development and work preparation – as part of a 24x7 on-call service agreement. So the bank forwards errors occurring at different offices to the Kiel IT specialists for clarification and handling as high-priori-

ty incidents. Helmut Meier and his team run the error to ground with a detailed analysis. At first, the experts check the environment of the application: Is the software running at all, that is, is it possible to start the program? Is the underlying database all right? Are the interfaces to other systems working correctly?

Since these and other questions can be answered positively, Consist now undertakes a shared analysis with the software manufacturer and provides them with the log files to do so. Working hand in hand with other external service providers for a customer is just an everyday part of Managed Services for Consist. It quickly becomes clear that this is a program error: The loan request module isn't working. The manufacturer corrects the program error, and sends Helmut Meier the corrected version. The experts in Kiel load the new version, test it together with the responsible IT contacts at the bank, then after approval by the customer's business department, they move it into production. From now on, the consultants at the offices can create financing offers for their customers again.

For further information:

Jörg Hansen
Phone: +49 (0)431/3993-593
e-mail: hansen@consist.de