Converting Powerhouse to Java quick, automated and at lower cost

Brains2B

StrongHold

In the past a lot of organizations have used Cognos Powerhouse to create business critical applications. Powerhouse was a very powerful environment for creating business applications. However, Powerhouse is becoming out-dated. Support and consultancy are less readily available making it harder to extend the software or integrate it with other software applications.

Action has to be taken if you want your software to keep up with your business. Until now your options where limited:
- Move the business requirements to an ERP-system
- Build a new application or manually convert the application to a modern programming language.
  None of which are very appealing: they are expensive, time-consuming and hard to control processes.

StrongHold offers you a more pleasant route to an up-to-date business application. StrongHold can automatically convert your current Powerhouse application to Java. Quick and at low-cost. The result is an easy to maintain, easily integrated and extensible business application with a fully graphical user interface, written in a modern object-oriented language. Your application will be ready for the future.

The result: A modern Java application which is easily maintained, extended and integrated with existing infrastructure

Manual conversion
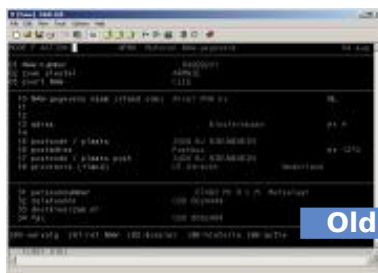
An example for rebuilding/conversion of one screen:

Another 4th generation language,e.g. Oracle Forms   4-6 hours

Another 3th generation language,e.g. Java or .NET 7-11 hours
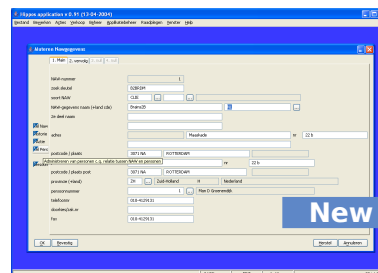
These figures do not include overhead and project management.

With StrongHold a lot of effort was spend making the converted software easily maintainable. The framework in which the newly converted software will run in specifically designed en tested to simplify custom tasks and integrate well with other software. The framework is transparent and makes use of open standards and common design techniques, making it easy for you to implement new functionality within the application.

Old

New

The conversion path made clear

StrongHold delivers an quick and efficient way to convert your Powerhouse application to Java. To make the entire conversion as easy as possible there are a few simple steps we take: First we will create a pilot on the basis of your existing application. This will be the starting point for determining the look and feel of your new application. We decide the configuration settings and the parts, if any, which could be better supported with custom build plug-ins. The prototype will also give a good indication of possible infrastructural needs. Manual correction of the code can be kept to a minimum.

After setting the stage the conversion itself is a simple push of the button. StrongHold converts 90% of the powerhouse code to working Java code with no intervention. The last 10% could be converted through a custom API or through manual correction. That last 10% is highly predictable and correction can be easily standardized.

Success story: Leasing company Arval PHH

Leasing company Arval PHH (formerly Arma) created a powerhouse application which encompassed all their internal and external business information needs. The application supported three languages and was build and maintained over a 15 years period. There were great advantages having all your business data in one application. One of the disadvantages: The huge costs and risk of migrating this application to a new platform or computer language. This is were the idea of StrongHold came in.

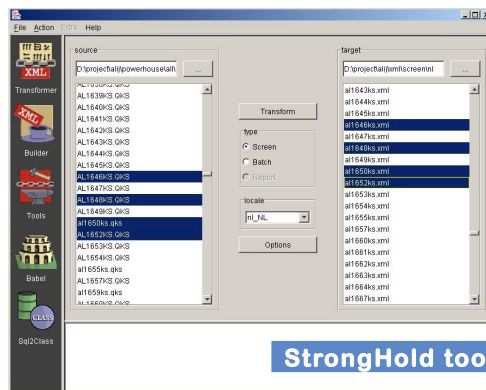## Development, conversion and training are done parallel

Arval PPH and Brains2B agreed on a business model in which the development of StrongHold and the conversion would run parallel. Early on it was also decided other tools would be used to replace the Quiz reporting. The conversion would therefor focus on Quick and QTP. The last important decision made was to train current staff in programming Java, so they would be able to do maintenance and future development of the converted project as well as help in the conversion itself.

Charactaristics

OLD ENVIRONMENT	NEW ENVIRONMENT
Powerhouse:	Java:
Quick: 1200 sources	2900 sources for MVC classes
Quiz: 600 sources	
QTP: 300 sources	
Database:	Database:
Oracle and powerhouse files	Oracle
OS:	OS:
Vax-VMS	Windows
Client:	Client:
Terminal emulation through thin client	Java-application through thin client

Pilot conversion brings details to light

An early pilot gave the users and end-user an opportunity to give their input on graphical user interface. It also made transparent where it would be efficient to have a custom plug-in: Using their current multi-language sources to make the new application multi-language and a plug-in to convert their custom search options into an appropriate Java equivalent. Some functionality was marked early on modernization making good use of the new environment. This included integration with Microsoft Office and Oracle Calendar

Roof-tiling approach to conversion smooths the transition

Because the project was of considerable size, the decision was made to divide it into different parts and realize each part overlapping with the next. While one part was being tested by end users, the next part was being system tested and the one after that was being converted. This gave us the opportunity to do the conversion with a limited amount of people and without too large a strain on day-to-day business. The complete application is now used throughout the organization.

StrongHold tools

Stronghold Conversion

- Conversion of screen sources to completely functional screens in a Java GUI environment, with a functional look-and-feel an full use of keyboard or mouse interface.
  - StrongHold can determine from the Powerhouse sources where GUI-items like selection lists, radio buttons and tabs could be used, even for character based Powerhouse applications.
- Conversion of batch sources to efficient Java programs which can either run locally or through an application server.
- Control of external processes like batches, reports and external programs is integrated in the application. PL/SQL integration is supplied with this product, it is however easy to integrate other external processes.
- Conversion of reports to XML and stylesheets giving an instant possibility to generate output to printers, html, e-mail or postscript formats
- Labels, tooltips, context dependent help functionality and user messages are generated and integrated from the data dictionaries, or sources. This technique also supplies an easy way for creating multi language applications
- Data-structure information will be converted to scripts for relational database systems
- Every step in the conversion process can be influenced through a public API. Through this custom changes and addition can be made to the conversion process, enforcing things like company standards for comments, coding, navigation and layout
- The StrongHold tools consist of the conversion tools, the framework for running the application and tools for managing the project: determining complexity of the sources for project planning, report of sources which are alike, report for interdependency of sources and tool to determine referential integrity from existing source code

Would you like more information?

If you are looking for a quick, efficient and low-cost way to convert your existing Powerhouse application to a modern and robust Java application please contact us at +31 6 514665800 or e-mail us at dennis@brains2b.org for an appointment

Contact

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