

WebSphere® software

Taikang Life insurance delivers on demand success with IBM WebSphere Information Integrator.

Overview

■ Challenge

To grow in the highly competitive insurance market, the company had to tie all its data together, providing a clear picture of its customers and associated services, without undergoing a major change to its existing IT infrastructure

■ Why IBM?

Company was pleased with its previous experience using IBM server platforms and information management systems

■ Solution

Unified information architecture providing centralized access to customer and corporate information

■ Business Benefits

Lower IT costs; faster development of new applications; comprehensive status reports delivered to corporate executives in real time, leading to improved strategic decision making and business analysis; increased employee productivity; enhanced customer service and business development opportunities



With WebSphere Information Integrator, Taikang business executives can easily access and better manage statistical data to facilitate superior business decision making.

China's recent entry into the World Trade Organization marks a new stage in the nation's opening to the outside world. As a result, China's life insurance sector is expecting fierce competition from overseas insurance companies. However, one leading insurer, Taikang Life Insurance Co., Ltd. (Taikang) is on the fast path to growth.

Founded in 1996 with headquarters in Beijing, Taikang has rapidly become a major player in the Chinese domestic insurance market. The company, with some 8,000 employees and more than 3.5 million customers, sells its

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– Wang Daonan, Chief Information Officer, Taikang Life Insurance Co., Ltd.

life, annuity and health policies to consumers through 120 branch offices throughout China, and a network of over 150,000 independent agents.

Disparate systems causing growing pains

Building a company of this size in seven years has not been without its challenges, according to Wang Daonan, chief information officer, Taikang. When the company was established, its IT department focused on simply building applications to get the various business units up and running rather than connecting the systems to each other. The company's various life insurance businesses relied on several different information management systems—including IBM DB2 Universal Database and IBM Informix Dynamic Server—while running on either IBM @server iSeries or IBM @server pSeries hardware platforms.

As the company grew, the different systems operated as separate silos of information, making it difficult to share data among business units. And with

its hands full maintaining increasingly complex applications, as well as adding new functionality such as online systems for customers, Taikang's IT team did not have the resources to tackle integrating the disparate corporate systems.

The disparate systems also made producing business reports a time-consuming and labor intensive process. These reports took weeks for a staff of more than 10 employees to compile. "The delay in getting these reports restricted our ability to respond rapidly to changing market conditions," Wang says. "By the time our managers got the data, the market situation might have changed."

The fact that the business unit applications were developed using different tools further complicated the environment. In addition, customer information is stored in a wide variety of formats, ranging from faxes and e-mails sent to Taikang's call center, which are then translated into XML, to incoming updates from the company's Web site that arrive in structured query language format.



Taikang's flexible computing environment quickly adapts to the changing demands of its user community.

“WebSphere Information Integrator enables one person—rather than a staff of more than 10 employees—to easily compile an up-to-the-minute, consolidated business intelligence report. Access to timely information greatly improves our strategic decision making and business analysis.”

—Wang Daonan, Chief Information Officer, Taikang Life Insurance Co., Ltd.

"To continue to grow the company in the highly competitive life insurance market, we needed to find a way to tie all our data together—providing a clear picture of our customers and associated services," says Wang. "But transferring the information into a single database would have been a very cumbersome and expensive process. We needed to improve access to our business information without undergoing a major change to our existing IT infrastructure."

Improving employee productivity and responsiveness

Taikang business and IT teams performed a thorough internal requirements analysis before evaluating several solutions which could satisfy their needs. Taikang ultimately turned to long-time vendor IBM for help integrating its silos of data with IBM WebSphere Information Integrator Advanced Edition, Version 8.1. The software runs on an IBM pSeries 670 system. IBM provided extensive sales and technical support, including local and U.S. teams, to ensure a successful rollout of the new solution.

Today, WebSphere Information Integrator allows Taikang to federate data from disparate database systems into a single consolidated central repository—providing easy centralized access to corporate and customer-related data. Taikang takes advantage of the high processing capabilities and interoperability in

WebSphere Information Integrator to provide real-time access to diverse data as if it were in a single database, regardless of where the data actually resides.

"WebSphere Information Integrator makes it look like our data is all in one database," Wang says, "so our employees can now easily pull business-critical information from many different parts of the company. This helps us react and adapt quickly to changes in the fast-evolving business climate while reducing our overall IT costs."

By providing one unified view of customer communication from different parts of the company, WebSphere Information Integrator has significantly improved the productivity and responsiveness of Taikang employees. "We've also greatly enhanced their ability to work together as a team, even if they're in different departments, because they can now view and share customer information in real time," says Wang. "Now, our employees can do a better job serving customers, because they have a 360-degree view of customer behavior and preferences."

That's significant for Taikang, which has always made providing superior customer support one of its cornerstone business principles. Using an information integration platform allows Taikang to provide standardized service to individual customers while further enhancing overall service quality.

Key Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere® Information Integrator Advanced Edition, Version 8.1
- IBM DB2® Universal Database™, Version 8.1
- IBM Informix® Dynamic Server, Version 7.3

Hardware

- IBM @server® iSeries™
 - IBM @server pSeries® 670
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Taikang's new unified data architecture is providing the ability to realize corporate-wide business performance management (BPM) results by dynamically monitoring individual businesses and processes. This has resulted in a high performance sales culture with constant recognition and a real-time view of performance. It has also helped company's executives to become more efficient, by giving them, for the first time, an up-to-the-minute, company-wide view of the firm's business.

In addition, the labor-intensive reports have been simplified by the application, which assembles the data automatically, and delivers it in real time. "WebSphere Information Integrator enables one person—rather than a staff of more than 10 employees—to easily compile an up-to-the-minute, consolidated business intelligence report. Access to timely information greatly improves our strategic decision making and business analysis."

Using WebSphere Information Integrator has also positively affected Taikang's IT environment by reducing the time required to develop new applications, as well as making its data architecture simpler and more stable. "The flexibility and scalability of WebSphere Information Integrator will allow us to meet the changing needs of our users," says Wang.

Laying a foundation for future growth

With this new solution, Taikang leads the market with the use of innovative technology, being one of the first Chinese insurance companies to achieve nationwide

data concentration. With WebSphere Information Integrator, Taikang continues laying a solid foundation for the future. The company has already developed a more robust business intelligence (BI) solution using Cognos that allows them to extend their existing data warehouse with real-time information from their operational systems. This extension of their existing BI processes has allowed them greater cross-sell and up-sell opportunities that were not possible before.

"Our new BI solution has helped us identify and up-sell new products to key clients, as well as provide different levels of service to specific customers," says Wang. "This will allow us to continue to enhance the satisfaction of our customers while opening new business opportunities."

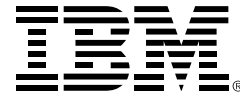
The potential market for insurance products in China is enormous, and with Taikang's new ability to tie together all of its information assets, it is poised to continue its rapid expansion. Concludes Wang, "WebSphere Information Integrator has given us the ability to maximize use of our corporate data—making us more efficient, better informed and much more nimble as a company."

For more information

Please contact your IBM marketing representative, IBM Business Partner or IBM Direct at: 1 800 IBM-CALL.

Visit our Web site at
ibm.com/software/data/integration

For more information about Taikang Life Insurance Co., Ltd., visit: www.taikang.com



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