

Connex dials up an industry-leading technology and services solution from IBM.



Connex is the leader in mobile communications and the largest Internet service provider (ISP) in Romania. The company's two major shareholders—Telesystem International Wireless (TIW) and Vodafone—are worldwide players in mobile communications services. Connex (www.connex.ro) launched Romania's first Global System for Mobile (GSM) network in April 1997 and now offers full communications solutions to more than 2.5 million customers. It provides voice, data and mobile Internet services through myX (Romania's first mobile portal) as well as data, fax and dial-up and dedicated Internet access. Connex customers, served by the company's 1,600 employees, can also take advantage of prepaid and postpaid service plans with electronic refill capabilities, mobile messaging services, entertainment services, including games and short text messages, and international calling and roaming services. Connex has changed the lives of people in Romania through respect for its customers, quality of service and courage to innovate.

Overview

■ **The Challenge**

Simplify a complex IT infrastructure design to enable improved systems integration and enhanced functionality

■ **The Solution**

IBM WebSphere® Business Integration for Telecom; IBM Global Services and IBM Business Integration Services

■ **Why IBM?**

Exceptional functionality, competitive pricing and a knowledgeable local integration team

■ **Key Business Benefits**

Enhanced system integration capabilities, improved customer service and the ability to quickly bring new services to market

“In addition to the fact that the IBM solution has helped us dramatically improve our application integration, I think one of the most important outcomes of this project is that we have an invaluable team that works closely with us and that fully understands our requirements and environment.”

—Laurentiu Mandu, IT Director, Connex

As a telecommunications company, Connex deals with typical industry challenges—establishing a competitive advantage, increasing profitability, finding new revenue streams and bringing new services and solutions to market first. But as the company entered its sixth year of operations, it noticed some mounting information technology (IT) problems. “We grew much more than anybody expected during our first five years in business, and we began to experience some IT issues because of it,” says Laurentiu Mandu, IT Director of Connex. To keep up with the pace of growth at Connex, Mandu says, IT engineers found themselves working more tactically than strategically to make up for limited functionality in some of the company’s systems, including billing. “We ended up with a confusing IT environment with lots of applications that were mostly written in-house. All of it was getting very complicated and hard to manage,” Mandu adds.

Planning for future communication excellence

As Connex started shifting its business focus from one of growth to one of maturity and stability, the company realized it needed to completely change the design of its IT infrastructure. “We needed a project that would lay the groundwork for enabling better system integration in the future,” emphasizes Mandu. “We also wanted to switch from the large number of in-house-developed applications that we were currently using to a smaller number of out-of-the-box solutions that could speak to each other via an integration point.”

After distributing a request for proposal to industry-leading integration vendors, Connex performed a comprehensive evaluation of the offers it received, and chose an IBM WebSphere Business Integration solution for several reasons. “IBM offered us the functionality that we required for a good price, as well as comprehensive services from a strong local integration team that could perform project implementation,” says Mandu. “The local IBM presence really influenced our decision.”

Unmatched IBM technology and services

Connex is using an IBM WebSphere Business Integration for Telecom solution, which uniquely addresses the integration challenges of the telecommunications industry. IBM WebSphere Business Integration InterChange Server runs on a cluster of servers to help ensure high availability and provide Connex with a

development and testing environment. A process automation server that helps the company manage several business applications as one, WebSphere Business Integration InterChange Server provides support for business-to-business channels and portals, multi-threaded and concurrent business logic execution, assured data integrity, and certified system and configuration management.

Connex is also using WebSphere Business Integration for Telecom pre-built collaborations to coordinate and control business processes that span multiple IT processing entities. These collaborations are at the heart of IBM WebSphere Business Integration solutions and perform the business and integration logic needed to oversee the actions of—and data movement between—those processing entities. WebSphere Business Integration pre-built adapters provide the interface between the collaborations and the applications. During its initial project, Connex implemented WebSphere Business Integration Customer Manager Collaboration and Adapters for its Portal Intranet and Clarify applications, together with a Java™ Database Connectivity (JDBC) Adapter. The JDBC Adapter enables the WebSphere Business Integration InterChange Server to exchange business objects with an application built on any database supported by a JDBC driver, and provides several advanced configuration properties for capabilities extending beyond the JDBC standard.

Other IBM technology and products that Connex is using include Interactive Voice Response (IVR) based on IBM WebSphere Voice Response on IBM @server™ pSeries™ servers, Intel®-based IBM @server xSeries™ servers running Microsoft® Windows® or Linux® operating systems, IBM Linear Tape-Open (LTO) tape libraries and backup devices, IBM PCs, and a workflow and document management solution based on IBM Lotus® Domino™.

Implementation of the IBM WebSphere Business Integration solution took just over three months and was completed on budget, which, according to Mandu, was extremely important to Connex. IBM Global Services provided project management services, and the local IBM WebSphere Business Integration Services team worked side by side with Connex's information systems staff to facilitate a knowledge transfer of the WebSphere Business Integration solution and its capabilities.

“One of the reasons why we are in a better position for future integration is because of the knowledge transfer that occurred between the IBM WebSphere Business Integration Services team and my staff.”

—Laurentiu Mandu, IT Director, Connex

Key Solution Components

IBM Software

- WebSphere® Business Integration
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IBM Services

- Global Services, WebSphere Business Integration Services
-

An IT change for the better

IBM WebSphere Business Integration for the telecommunications industry helps Connex easily interface its Clarify customer relationship management (CRM) solution with existing applications. Using WebSphere Business Integration Customer Collaboration, Connex was able to automate customer business processes across multiple applications. "In terms of business benefits, our customer operations staff can now view a single application for tracking customer interaction, which helps us greatly improve customer service," says Mandu.

With the IBM WebSphere Business Integration solution now in place, Connex anticipates shorter application integration times, as well as the ability to bring new services to market faster. Additionally, Mandu believes that the future integration of Connex's billing and CRM solutions with its enterprise resource planning strategy—a project it plans to undertake in 2003—is bringing the company a step closer to full business integration and business process modeling.

"The IBM solution is making a dramatic change in our IT environment, which will eventually result in better support for our business drivers and objectives," says Mandu. "We are in a much better position now from both a technology and integration perspective to approach major integration initiatives in the future."

For more information

To learn more about IBM Global Services and IBM WebSphere Business Integration Solutions, please visit:

ibm.com/software/integration



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