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| Nick: | Hi, and welcome to the latest in the “Did You Say Mainframe?” podcast series! This is where we ask technical experts from the mainframe software and hardware areas to come and talk to us about some topic. Today I’m joined by Mark Cocker of the CICS team. Hi Mark, welcome to “Did You Say Mainframe?” |
| Mark: | Thank you Nick, nice to be here. |
| Nick: | OK we’ve noticed that CICS have been putting rather a lot of investment into cloud, and specifically the DevOps area. What are you most proud of in your contributions to this DevOps area, Mark? |
| Mark: | Well, one thing is the general approach we’ve taken in this release, and in particular, this hill. We’ve worked very closely with our design partners to really investigate what are the pains and issues they have deploying CICS applications. And these days, people of course are deploying more sophisticated applications, things like web applications, the cloud, and policies – things like that. And just being able to create those applications, build and deploy them into CICS has been a bit of a challenge because it’s something new. So I’ve been really proud of the fact that we’ve worked with those customers to, you know, understand their difficulties, and to really come up solutions that are going to help. |
| Nick: | And with these solutions that you’ve brought in, what’s their value? What’s there to light their fire? |
| Mark: | Yeah so, we’re really hoping to take a lot of the effort away that they have. So instead of doing things manually today with the CICS Explorer, for example, to export your bundles or applications and lifecycle those, we’re really trying to help build systems and automate that such that a developer can create those things, put them in their source code management system, build them out, and deployment automation systems either based on products like UrbanCode or based on automation like JCL, can deploy those in a really robust manner. That means that you can rely on them day to day. |
| Nick: | So to me that sounds like you’re kind of orchestrating a flow and you’re kind of managing that whole flow of development activity. |
| Mark: | Yeah that’s right. So today our customers have a process that they’re honed over many years to deploy their applications, but, if you like, sometimes it’s creaking at the seams; there are new challenges, new components to be deployed. So we really feel like that we’re complementing customers have by making the new things easier. So making the deployment of a bundle, which can have lots of different components in it, and being able to package that and deploy it with some simple utilities now. |
| Nick: | And I think you mentioned in your response something called UrbanCode Deploy? Would you like to just expand on that a little bit? |
| Mark: | Yeah sure, so customers today can hand craft their automation suite, but that takes quite a lot of effort to keep up to date and to make sure it’s still fulfilling their needs. Whereas UrbanCode has been around for a number of years and is an industry leading product to automate the deployment of applications, and it’s come from a distributed background where there are a lot of challenges in this space and it’s now, since IBM acquired it a few years ago, it’s really got some great capabilities to deploy z/OS components: so things like data sets and deploying CICS components. So we have a new plugin, a CICS plugin for UrbanCode, and it makes it a natural extension to be able to deploy CICS components, and indeed make sure that those components are all ready for use, be it in a production environment and also in test; because sometimes tests can be just as challenging because there are lots of different test environments that you need to deploy to. |
| Nick: | OK, well that’s really interesting. Are there any other elements of this deployment hill that you’ve been attacking as part of your design thinking? |
| Mark: | Yes, so the actual deployment, as I say, can done through products like UrbanCode but we also have been providing a utility called DFH deploy that is provided with the CICS product and that allows you to perhaps just extend your existing JCL automation suite to not only to prepare your sort of traditional compiled COBOL programmes, but also to deploy bundles in a very easy to use scripting language. We also have a build toolkit that allows you to build your source codes from bundles and applications. So together these sets of two or three components allow you to much more easily deploy your CICS applications. |
| Nick: | OK, well I think we’ve probably excited our listeners here. Where can they find more information about these aspects? |
| Mark: | So we obviously have an open beta site for CICS 5.3, so if you want to try and download these utilities and read the knowledge center and so on go ahead and look for the open beta site. The UrbanCode Deploy has its own site and you can download a free trial and get that running and connected to a CICS region and downloaded to CICS plugin and get that going. We also have a great demo that Russell Bonner has put together that shows you a good end-to-end picture of how these things can come together to help, and that’s available from the CICS website library page. Lastly, we’re putting together a Redbook at the moment which tells the whole story about DevOps, how these tools can fit into your existing process, and hopefully make it much easier to deploy your CICS applications. That Redbook should be available, you know, towards the end of the year. |
| Nick: | OK and obviously we’re really excited because CICS TS V5.3 is about to come out but is this UrbanCode Deploy, does it work with prior releases of CICS? |
| Mark: | Yeah so, I guess the other exciting thing about what we’re doing here is both the build toolkits works with all CICS releases and the UrbanCode Deploy plugin works with all CICS releases, so there’s something for everyone in this new space. |
| Nick: | OK well, thank you for taking the time to talk to us today Mark and put UrbanCode Deploy in the build toolkit on the map for us! |
| Mark: | Yep great, it’s a pleasure as always Nick. |
| Nick: | So that about wraps it up for this podcast. For more details please go to ibm.com/software/OS/systemz/podcasts/websphereonz. Join us again for another interesting “Did You Say Mainframe?” topic but for now this is Nick Garrod saying thank you for listening. |