



CASE STUDY

Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Establishes a Single Path to Production

Industry

Insurance

Challenge

New web application development across in-house and outsourced teams made it hard to track processes, synchronize infrastructure and tools, and meet compliance needs.

Results

- Centralized and automated web development processes across teams, platforms, and locations
- New levels of control, visibility, and quality
- Simplified internal and external compliance preparation and documentation

Products

- Rocket® Aldon Lifecycle Manager (IBM i Edition)
- Rocket® Aldon Lifecycle Manager for (Enterprise Edition)

Application

- Software Change Management
- IT Compliance

Company

Located in the heartland of the U.S. in Grinnell, Iowa, Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance, reinsures more than 300 smaller farm mutual insurance companies across the Midwestern United States. Founded in 1909, the company also provides basic insurance, including commercial and personal auto, homeowners, liability, and workers' compensation coverage. Grinnell's nearly 15,000 independent agents sell products including customized accounting and claims management software to the mutual companies it serves. Staying on the leading edge of technology has played an integral role in the company's growth and success.

Challenge

Grinnell's development group was spread across multiple locations, working from different platforms and/or SUM solutions. Teams were not working efficiently together, and a lack of integration among systems affected communication and productivity. It was difficult to manage the outsourced team without process-centric systems in place to track SLAs.

The Grinnell IT group included multiple COBOL, Java, and .NET developers with a team of outsourced developers for Web applications. At any given time, there were at least 50 projects running across the geographically dispersed IT team.

In addition to developing and managing essential business applications, Grinnell IT continually added new, more complex web-based projects to support insurance broker and agent software applications. The group also modernized the company's IBM i solutions by adding new Web GUIs to the most important back-end applications. These projects added a new layer of complexity for management, especially since insurance industry applications required constant updating with new criteria and business rules.

Grinnell IT still supported promotions manually, which compromised productivity and created problems for labels and naming. As projects increased in number, size and scope, release management became painful. Path directories were missing, and critical application changes and updates were getting lost. Without adequate processes and visibility, errors were unavoidable.



What's more, as an insurance company, Grinnell faced regular audits. Because the firm was handling compliance deliverables on a manual level, it was a struggle to provide the necessary detailed documentation for all IT activities on an ongoing basis.

Solution

To address the company's challenges, and to empower the IT group to both innovate and deliver operational efficiency, Grinnell turned to Rocket Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) solutions. By standardizing on Rocket® Aldon Lifecycle Manager (IBM i Edition) and Rocket® Lifecycle Manager (Enterprise Edition), the IT team created a unified environment for developers working on multiple applications and platforms in different locations. The solution put everyone—including outsourced teams—in the same process-centric system.

Results

The Rocket ALM solutions easily plugged into all of Grinnell's platforms and tools, essentially serving as the central nervous system. With Rocket, the IT team could manage every stage of application development, with full flexibility to work with other tools, standards, and methodologies.

Nita Brumbaugh, the manager of BIS integrated systems for Grinnell, was closely involved in the product selection decision. According to Brumbaugh, the benefits of Rocket ALM solutions exceeded original expectations. "By creating a single path to production with Rocket, the company's newly centralized IT team gained new levels of control and visibility, while eliminating coding errors and allowing us to focus on the business of delivering quality software."

Comprehensive software configuration management was a key issue for Grinnell IT, particularly as projects increased in complexity. The Rocket ALM products provided everything Grinnell IT needed to automatically build, organize, and maintain a central inventory of all application components. The development team could easily access components by business function and at various stages, across multiple environments, and in conjunction with multiple project teams. Results included turnkey parallel development and conflict resolution, as well as easy merging of releases.

Ultimately, Brumbaugh credits Rocket ALM solutions as making it simpler to verify, approve, and archive change requests, requirements, and development projects. The software also transformed Grinnell's traditional compliance preparation process by providing real-time status updates to requesters and approvers to ensure the oversight, enforceability, and traceability needed for both internal and external regulatory mandates.

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Nita Brumbaugh
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