



Visma Enterprise

Visma Enterprise Future-Proofs Mission-Critical Workloads by Replatforming COBOL* to the Cloud



Visma Enterprise Denmark provides HR and payroll solutions for the enterprise market. A subsidiary of Norway's Visma Group and comprising over 200 independent legal units, the company digitizes and streamlines people administration across the entire employee journey, from onboarding to offboarding. With 180 employees across two facilities, Visma Enterprise provides salary and ancillary services for 250,000 citizens and over 1,500 employers.

Challenge

With a quarter million Danes depending on Visma Enterprise for their payroll and people management needs, the stakes could not be higher. By 2022, this established 50-year-old company recognized that maintaining their current trajectory was not enough to deliver the exceptional service their clients deserved. Their COBOL-based salary application, running on heritage mainframe systems, was creating operational bottlenecks that demanded immediate attention. The leadership team knew they needed to evolve beyond their existing infrastructure to achieve the flexibility and scalability their growing client base required, while ensuring the stability and proactive monitoring capabilities essential for seamless operations.

This outdated setup limited software deployments to roughly once a month. Installing and testing new software required significant manual labor and had to be performed off-hours by the company's developers. The entire system needed to be taken offline for upgrades, updates, patches, and new features. Dependencies on platforms such as Visma Enterprise's database engine further slowed deployments.

Visma Enterprise's CI/CD pipeline also lacked automation. Their highly manual workflows slowed down developers, reduced engineering performance, and increased the risk of human error.

Finally, long-term maintainability was a growing concern. The company's developers were mostly unfamiliar with the complexities of its COBOL mainframe. They saw it as a "black box" that simply worked, without truly understanding what made it tick.

As a result, Visma Enterprise struggled to keep pace with younger companies that were leveraging modern technologies. Their aging infrastructure directly impacted the company's time to market for new features and bug fixes. It also made it challenging to recruit developers who preferred working with a state-of-the-art technology stack — making their transformation initiative both necessary and time-sensitive.

The Challenge

Accelerate delivery velocity and reduce costs by migrating mainframe workloads to Amazon Web Services® (AWS®) and automating COBOL deployment with modern CI/CD pipelines.



“We previously tried to convert COBOL code to .NET, but it didn’t turn out the way we expected. It required a lot of manual work, and it took so long that we lost attention from our business units and stakeholders. We needed a different approach with less risk and faster results.”

Jesper Plantener
Chief Architect
Visma Enterprise

Faced with these operational challenges, Visma Enterprise embarked on a valuable learning journey by exploring an automated conversion of their COBOL code to .NET. This initial approach provided crucial insights into the complexities of modernization, though it did require more extensive manual refinement than anticipated. After three years of hands-on experience with this methodology, the team has gained deep understanding of what works — and what doesn’t — in large-scale transformation projects. This learning journey proved instrumental in shaping their strategic approach, ultimately guiding them toward a more effective solution with Rocket® Enterprise Server* that could deliver the faster, more reliable results their business demanded.

Solution

Visma Enterprise opted for a phased approach that modernized their environment while mitigating risk. The company chose to replatform their mainframe applications on the public cloud without initially rewriting its COBOL code. This permitted the updating of key dependencies and adoption of cloud-based CI/CD pipeline automation immediately without delaying its transition away from COBOL.

The company selected Rocket Software solutions in partnership with AWS® to replatform and modernize their environment to Rocket® Enterprise Server, moving from a traditional mainframe operating model toward a more optimized cloud-hosting arrangement. The migration to their new environment required an accelerated timeline because the company’s mainframe contract was expiring.

A senior project lead was assigned and a team of technical consultants were mobilized to rapidly assess Visma Enterprise’s needs and work with the company during and after the migration.

As a first step, Visma Enterprise migrated their database to Microsoft® SQL Server®, eliminating the third-party dependency that had been a bottleneck for its developers. Next, the company automated its CI/CD pipelines and improved their monitoring capabilities.

Finally, they moved their COBOL code from the mainframe to AWS®, further reducing costs and futureproofing the infrastructure. The entire process, completed in mid-2023, took nine months and gave the company the breathing room it needed to plan for and finalize its transition from COBOL by the end of 2025.

Results

Switching from a mainframe to Rocket® Enterprise Server reduced Visma Enterprise’s infrastructure costs by 50%. The company could now scale infrastructure during peak periods and reinvest savings in the next phase of their modernization initiatives.

Eliminating external dependencies and improving their technology stack has given the company’s developers full ownership of their code and infrastructure. Also gone was the need to create tickets with third-party vendors. This reduced lead times on infrastructure changes, improved the throughput and quality of their work, and raised the employee engagement score from 45 to 74 — a 64% improvement.

The Solution

Replatform COBOL environment using Rocket® Enterprise Server to enable the company’s long-term modernization journey.



Rocket Enterprise Server enabled us to modernize our entire development environment. Replatforming our payroll application in AWS without changing our COBOL code was the fastest way to do the migration while minimizing the risk of logical application issues.”

Jesper Plantener
Chief Architect
Visma Enterprise

Automating the CI/CD pipeline has drastically reduced human error, increased observability, and improved the development team’s monitoring capabilities. The result is faster issue resolution and automated deployments across the company’s four environments. Historically, they released software once per month. They can now release multiple times a week and achieve their goal of accelerating time to market for patches and new features.

Rocket Enterprise Server has given Visma Enterprise a cutting-edge, rock-solid environment to fully modernize their infrastructure. They’ve also been able to transition their codebase and attract new talent to better compete in the lucrative payroll and people management space.

The Impact

Happier developers

Over 60% increase in employee engagement score and full ownership of code and infrastructure, leading to higher throughput and quality of work.

Lower costs

A 50% reduction in operating costs, freeing funds for reinvestment in cutting-edge technology and infrastructure improvements.

Futureproof infrastructure for tomorrow’s IT

With Rocket® Enterprise Suite, Visma Enterprise has a strong foundation to drive ongoing modernization by using GenAI to refactor COBOL code and transition to modern IT architectures.

By combining strategic replatforming with automation and cloud-native capabilities, Visma Enterprise now has a scalable, resilient, and modern development environment — empowering their teams to innovate faster and laying the groundwork for the transformation.

(*Formerly a Micro Focus® product)

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