

Safety a crucial factor for CGA when choosing LANSA



COMPAGNIE GENERALE
D'AFFACTURAGE

Compagnie Générale d'Affacturage (CGA), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Société Générale Group and member of International Factors Group, is a major player in the French factoring market with sales turnover of nearly 8.5 billion Euros in 2004. CGA has used LANSA for 5250 and Web development since 2002. CGA now uses LANSA Integrator for integration projects with the French central bank.

Today, **Christophe Dirlik**, IT manager at CGA, relies on LANSA for all CGA's internal development. "I do not regret this choice at all, as we have not had any concerns since. LANSA is well integrated by all the teams. In the event of any new development, one does not even ask the question, LANSA is the sure choice. My trust is very reasoned and based on the results which have led me to follow the product as it has evolved."

A Consolidation Challenge

"When I joined the company at the end of 2001, CGA's main customers were in the SMB market," explains Dirlik. "But CGA wanted to broaden its profile and reach by providing products for large accounts as well. There was also a strong need to enhance integration with the bank's business as a whole."

"While the core systems were on the iSeries, many additional applications had been built with different tools over a number of databases, including GAP, COBOL, Power Builder, Visual BASIC applications accessing SQL Server, Oracle, Access and DB2/400."

"The challenge was to consolidate the IT environment to better support the company's expansion plans with the existing team. We wanted a better way to integrate these systems and productively build new applications."

"Another goal was to simplify customer and third-party management systems by providing client/server access over centralized data."

"The biggest constraint was the skill of our development team. While the team knew the iSeries well, it had little experience with client/server or Web applications. In theory, we could take one of three approaches. We could complement the team by hiring experts with the specific skills we needed, retrain the existing teams, or find an integrated development toolset that would allow our existing team, with appropriate mentoring and training, to build both Web and client/server applications on the iSeries."

"Since the main objective was to consolidate and support core business, there was a real need to reach a single base on iSeries that allowed the exploitation of future technologies."

"An integrated CASE tool that could build advanced 5250 and client/server applications, as well as providing Internet access was, in my view, essential."

"I have used LANSA in various ways for 15 years," says Dirlik. "I worked at a software vendor where we completely rebuilt two systems using LANSA for the iSeries. One was for a stainless steel distributor and the other an insurance institution."

"My experience is that building applications with the integrated LANSA toolset is much more reliable than with traditional development tools. The risk is very low."

Today, Dirlik is head of the three IT departments and his team of 25 works on many projects using the full LANSA toolset.

"CGA wanted to broaden its profile and enhance integration with the bank as a whole."

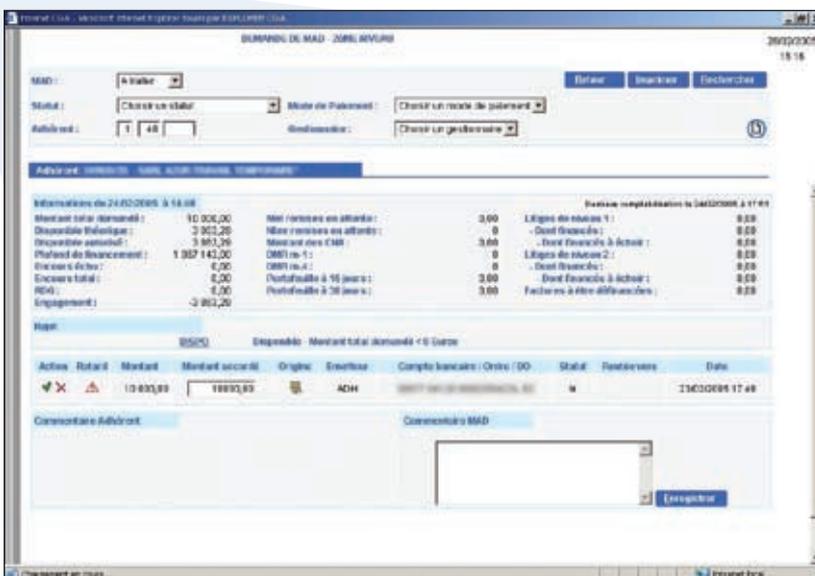
A Cautious Adoption

"At the beginning of 2002, our first projects were modest and non-critical," continues Dirlik. "A small Intranet was developed in-house with LANSA for the Web. It was a combination of a Web portal and a menu manager that let us maintain access rights in one place and present both LANSA Web and 5250 applications to the users. While it was our test drive before building a true application, we still use it today."

"Our next Web development project was customer management. Again, before we exposed the system to the world over the Web, we limited the risk by building a simple application for internal use only."

The first major LANSA project at CGA was project DAILLY for the back office processing on behalf of the Société Générale network of secured lending under the Daily Act.

"The application supports three groups of users. Firstly, it gives internal staff a 5250 interface with the bank's trade and the accounting software packages. Secondly, it provides extranet access for our agency network and finally it gives customers internet access to use their business agreement on a daily basis." →



Compagnie Générale d'Affacturage has used LANSA for 5250 and Web development since 2002, and now uses LANSA Integrator for integration projects with the French central bank.

"The system was built in two years and went live in 2004, without any problems. The product is still in use today and was enthusiastically adopted by all three groups."

Today, all customer requests for financing are handled by a LANSAbuilt Web application. Reusing the existing business logic and validations made it possible to automate the application process, with 80 percent being processed without the need for intervention by CGA staff.

"We are now testing enhancements to the LANSA intranet for cash delivery follow-up, the goal being to make it more user friendly and efficient. The Web portal will publish additional iSeries information, which was not previously accessible by users or required too complex handling. The core of the existing iSeries business logic is reused by calling existing routines directly or by starting processing in other systems which also run on the iSeries," says Dirlik.

Integration with La Banque de France with LANSA Integrator

Until the end of 2005, the French central bank (La Banque de France) marketed information about banks and finance companies via Minitel. CGA automatically captured data from the Minitel screens and stored it in a database. This information was used by CGA internally and was also provided to customers.

When La Banque de France cancelled the Minitel service, CGA had two options. Either to let people access the information directly over the Internet and print it out for personal use, which did not suit CGA as there was a need to reuse the information internally, or use a system provided by the bank that distributed this information using XML.

"While we could purchase software that gave Internet connectivity with La Banque de France, we needed to process the XML requests and responses. LANSA Integrator was the logical choice," says Dirlik. "Today, this "Electronic File" application is being redeveloped entirely in LANSA."



Christophe Dirlik, IT manager at CGA, has used LANSA in various ways for 15 years and now relies on LANSA for all of CGA's internal development using the full LANSA toolset.

"We are also redeveloping the processing of credit arbitration transactions, which will either be done automatically or, if manual intervention is required, produce a complete file for review."

The Benefits of a Team Approach

"Today, wherever we can, we use LANSA," says Dirlik. "Whether we are building 5250 or Web applications, we take pleasure in reusing existing business logic and validations."

"The main advantage of LANSA is that we can stay on the reliable, secure and robust iSeries platform and work with a server environment we know well, while still being able to deploy applications via client/server, internet, intranet or extranet.

"This approach is now our standard and has the advantage of federating our teams and making them think holistically, rather than working in isolation in their own little corners."

"Even if this was perceived as a constraint at the beginning, today everyone works in the same environment. This has paralleled the evolution of CGA's information systems towards a simpler consolidated environment."

"Learning to build basic Web applications with LANSA is very intuitive. To go further and enhance the user interface is a little more complex. But by employing the skills of external contractors who had worked on a LANSA Web application for an insurer, we never had any problems. Today, all our screens have a consistent easy-to-use navigation."

"Plus, if we need the support of the LANSA France technical team, we get an effective and fast response," continues Dirlik.

"Today, we use LANSA, whether we are building 5250 or Web applications."

A Safe Choice for the Future

"I do not have any concerns for the future. I would be very surprised if we ever have a technological requirement that LANSA cannot meet," says Dirlik.

"The probability that LANSA cannot support the ongoing evolution of our applications appears nonexistent to me."

"Our major project this year is implementing the latest version of our core factoring software package which is now 100 percent Java."

"Our LANSA applications will have to integrate with pure Java and LANSA Version 11 is the natural solution for that. While data can remain on the iSeries, LANSA is designed to work with any environment, RPG, .Net or Java."

"But the iSeries has a strong future. The platform continues to evolve and we probably use only 10 percent of its capacity. It is easy to manage, reliable and meets all our needs."

"With LANSA, we can safely evolve and modernize our applications at our own pace," concludes Dirlik. ■

COMPANY AND SYSTEM INFORMATION

- Compagnie Générale d'Affacturage (CGA), a wholly owned subsidiary of the Société Générale Group and a member of the International Factors Group, is a major player in the French factoring market with 10.5 percent market share.
- Headquartered in La Plaine Saint-Denis, a suburb of Paris, CGA employs nearly 320 people. CGA specializes in the financing and management of commercial credits and has a wide range of products. In April 2004, CGA was the first French factoring company to be certified under AFAQ ISO 9001.

For more information visit: www.c-g-a.fr

- CGA has a model 550 iSeries for production and a model 520 for development. There are also 30 Windows servers.