

No looking back for Groupama AC



Assurance-Crédit

Groupama Assurance Crédit (Groupama AC) is a division of the Groupama Group, a mutual insurance, banking and financial services group headquartered in France. Groupama has over 39,000 employees serving 16 million members and customers. Groupama AC chose RAMP from LANSA to modernize its COBOL and IBM i-based business application, BIS-Inforis, with new functionality and modern technologies, while preserving its existing investment. The solution includes Web services, Windows integration and workflow automation.

Jean-Luc Even, IT Director at Groupama AC, says, "We are enjoying modern screens, enhanced user friendliness and flawless integration between IBM i and Windows applications. Users are more efficient and development has been simplified for our IT team. Nothing in the world could make us go back to the old system."

User Productivity Hindered

Groupama AC is in the credit insurance business. It provides cover against payment defaults arising from the poor state of the accounts of its customers (insolvency and other market risk), or from political and economic situations in the countries its customers export to (political risk). Groupama AC serves a highly diverse clientele, ranging from small and medium enterprises to exporters and commercial growers.

From the AS/400 days onwards, almost 20 years ago, Groupama AC has been using a heavily customized and extended implementation of BIS-Inforis, a COBOL

and IBM i-based insurance solution. Over the years BIS has been extended with various Windows-based applications, but up until recently its core functionality was still accessed mostly from 5250 (character-based) screens.

The 5250 screens were limited to 24 rows and 80 columns, considerably restricting the possibility to add content. In addition to the shortcomings of the 5250 screens, Groupama's users continuously needed to switch between 5250 and Windows applications, having to login over and over again for each operation. Navigating between the poorly integrated applications was significantly hindering the day-to-day

productivity of nearly 100 business users.

Groupama AC was eager to switch to a single, modern graphical user interface that would allow for easy navigation between applications. Yet the company wanted to keep all insurance data on its existing IBM i system.

Mr Even explains, "Our two main priorities were without a doubt making the screens more user friendly and boosting efficiency. However, in the process of modernizing, we didn't want to put the business at risk by migrating our data to another platform. So, we had to find a tool capable of upgrading our business package without compromising the data held in our existing system."

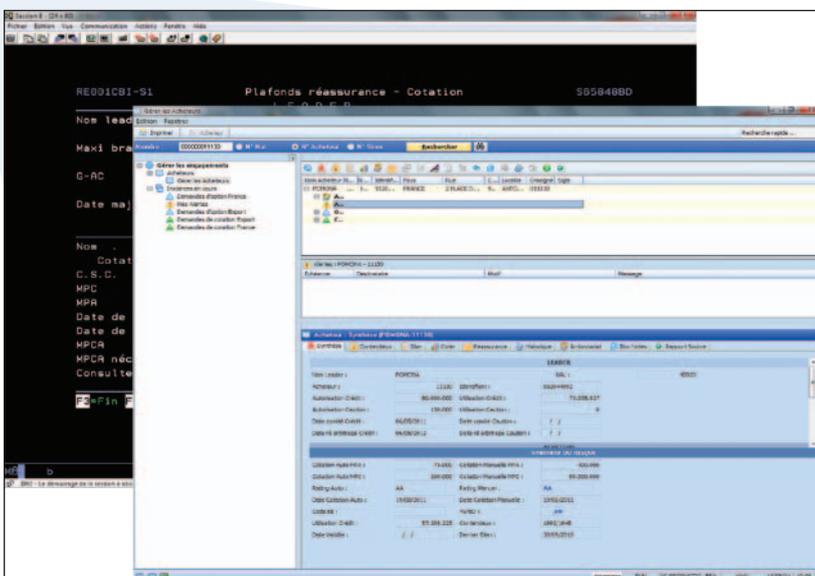
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Revamp and Redevelop

Mr Even and his team researched a number of application modernization tools. "After comparing the offers from several vendors, we decided that we didn't want to choose between revamping screens and redeveloping code. We wanted both. LANSA was the only company that offered an integrated set of product modules, allowing us to gradually evolve and eventually truly overhaul our business solution," he says.

LANSA's RAMP, which contains a screen Web enablement/modernization component and a 4GL development tool, was selected. A joint project team was set up that included members of Groupama AC's in-house development team as well as LANSA consultants. For several months they worked closely together, discussing every step of the legacy application modernization project.

In November 2010 the RAMP modernized insurance solution was rolled out to a large pilot group of users. At that time, 30% of the old core system had been redeveloped with RAMP's embedded Visual LANSA Framework tool and 70% had been visually redesigned. The pilot rollout was a huge success. →



In the modernized application navigation is clearer, faster and more intuitive, allowing users to work more efficiently.

Users and IT Team Benefit

"The pilot was barely implemented before we started to get positive feedback from the users. They told us that nothing in the world could make them go back to the old system," says Mr Even.

"In the RAMP framework, all applications integrate seamlessly. Using RAMP we have been able to expand and improve our business package, thus meeting user needs better."

"The system is more productive in two ways. For end users, navigation is clearer, faster and more intuitive, allowing users to be more efficient. The old 5250 screens were limited and users often had to access multiple screens to accomplish a single task. Now, information is consolidated and from just a single screen users can access a wide variety of information."

"For the IT team, development has been simplified. Our developers have gone from a procedural language to a high-level object-oriented language. In the long-term, that's undeniably a source of productivity."

The learning phase for LANSA was short, according to Mr Even, "Compared with the learning curve for other languages, it took our developers very little time to learn LANSA and become productive with it."

LANSA has also improved the flow of information with insurance holders, brokers and financial institutions. By optimizing the daily tasks for all parties that are involved in delivering on Groupama's commitments, the needs of policy holders are met more quickly.

Users can access all the information they need from their desks. For example, when they need information about a buyer from one of our customers, from a single redeveloped application they can access information in Groupama's own database, as well as information from third party institutions (financial analysis, credit rating and other registered information). All the information links are integrated into the redeveloped application. Everything is automated and available with a few mouse clicks.

Karine Bensamoun, Risk Analyst at Groupama AC, says "Our business is to hunt down information. We must be able to respond fast and provide accurate and



The IT development team at Groupama Assurance Cr dit – Left to right: Fran ois Beau, Jean-Paul Arnould, Jean-Luc Even, Yves Arnaud, Nathalie Laloux.

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reliable information at all times. In my 15 years at Groupama AC, the working methods have never been so user friendly as today. Access to various information channels has been simplified, our screens are modern and navigation is much more intuitive."

"It is incredible how much time is saved. Previously a given task would require that we enter the same piece of information four times in as many screens. Now it's all done with just a single click. Multiply that by the number of daily requests and you quickly realize that the difference is like night and day."

All Promises Delivered

Now, a few months after the pilot implementation of the modernized solution, Groupama AC is fully satisfied with its choice of RAMP. The modernized solution is already used by 50% of Groupama AC's users and the company is planning to roll out the RAMP-ed solution to all its IBM i users.

"We are enjoying modern screens, enhanced user friendliness and flawless integration between IBM i and Windows applications. The Groupama AC challenge was

successfully met by the LANSA company and its consultants by implementing the RAMP modernization solution," says Mr Even.

Mr Even concludes, "LANSA delivered on all its promises. The initial objectives were reached and we even had a few pleasant surprises regarding features and functionalities. We are completely satisfied. The next step is to equip all our staff with the modern solution. Our relationship with LANSA therefore has a promising future." ■

Snapshot

Customer: Groupama is the leading mutual insurer in France. www.groupama-ac.fr

Challenge: The core business application needed to be modernized beyond screen revamping, but a data migration had to be avoided because of its associated risks.

Solution: RAMP offers a framework that integrates both redevelopment and GUI redesign. At Groupama's first roll out 30% of the system was redeveloped and 70% visually redesigned.

Key Benefits: Groupama can gradually evolve and eventually truly overhaul its legacy system. Immediately at a first rollout users enjoyed productivity gains and application development was simplified.

Products Used: RAMP and Visual LANSA.