



Goal:

Create a stable production environment quickly and cost-effectively

Challenge:

Replace the DBMS while other IT applications were migrated or updated

Solution:

Contract with Cincom Professional Services for SUPRA to ensure full support

Key results:

- DBMS upgraded on time, within budget, with minimal changes, and without schedule interference
- Saved five staff years of effort
- "Tremendous cost saving" in the changing environment
- Mentored and trained BLS staff to administer their system
- DBMS fully supported with no loss of performance

Profile in success: **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics**

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics relies on Cincom to stabilize database for system upgrades



Situation:

When Sean Curran accepted the position of Chief of Division of Producer Price Systems at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), he discovered that many systems at BLS were unsupported – emphatically against policy. Immediately his goal was to upgrade to supported versions, but in the simplest way possible. It was a practical decision driven by cost considerations and mission obligation, but Curran said it also had to do with “letting me sleep at night.”

But where to start? An obvious place was with the three-decades-old database management system that had served the BLS during seven White House administrations and countless shifts in employment trends: TOTAL®,

from Cincom Systems, Inc. Had it been any other vendor's product, Curran could have counted on changing vendors. Instead, Curran knew he could count on Cincom.

Curran had a full plate: an unsupported DBMS, an unsupported release of CICS, an unsupported version of the Cincom MANTIS® application development language, all still on an OS/390, and a need to migrate to the new IBM z/OS. He had strict, mandated deadlines for such deliverables as the Producer Price Index (PPI), which measures price change in the economy, a leading economic indicator. "In addition, we were doing parallel redevelopment of all of our software and switching to a new database environment – which is in itself a multi-year project. That's when we had you guys do an assessment of the current production environment and what we needed to do to convert."

The BLS commissioned a study with Cincom Professional Services that revealed how to upgrade the TOTAL system to Cincom's SUPRA® product – promptly and inexpensively, without replacing applications or overhauling the entire database. Services included assessment, initial analysis, training, consultation, and providing compatibility exits, "which then saved us hundreds and hundreds of hours," Curran said. Cincom's "consultant developed a plan that enabled us to minimize the amount of changes in our operating environment. He then provided the training, mentoring and consulting that enabled us to do the bulk of the work ourselves."

Consultant is a blessing

Having the Cincom consultant on hand brought results both obvious and subtle. When you can't figure out the question, let alone the answer, the consultant is a blessing, Curran said. "We were able to actually do most of it, but he provided the brainpower to get us through the hoops and hurdles." Moreover, the consultant brought the tools and technologies that resulted in both cost and time saving, leading to achievement of goals.

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The Cincom consultant's professionalism and flexibility – working by e-mail, phone, or on site as the situation warranted – not only supplemented Curran's staff but offered comfort. "He was always able to respond to us fairly quickly. We were very pleased with that. When we needed him, we needed him, and the flexibility was tremendous."

Not that there weren't bumps in the road, Curran said. "When we were having a problem, we just found another way to do it. That was the thing with [the consultant's] expertise: he always had another method, some other kind of tool to work with."

No worries about the database

Upgrading from TOTAL to SUPRA allowed BLS programmers to proceed with their conversions in a supported environment without fretting about the database. "We had this major change in the way we do business, and we changed thousands of programs," Curran noted. "Just compiling it took days. But we didn't have to rewrite it. It was worth five person years of effort to us."

"If you can do something like this, move from one environment to another with little pain, that's tested and implemented within a few months – you just do it no matter what," Curran asserted. "You always want to be on the latest version, because then you've got more options."

Cincom's consulting service offered a bonus: it allowed the BLS to implement additional Cincom technology for data access and integration across platforms. "We couldn't have done that before," Curran admitted. "Now we've got this great tool that we can use to get to the database[s] a lot easier than having somebody write the SAS code. The users will be going crazy with it. It's going to enable us to use all the tools that the new supported operating system will allow us to."

"A tremendous saving"

Curran ticked off the outcomes: The BLS "substantially increased the stability of the PPI operating environment. We were able to make the change from TOTAL to SUPRA and upgrade our CICS and MANTIS environments to the latest versions in a very short time. We were also able to make several beneficial improvements in the way we operate our production environment. The main benefit is a stable production environment that supports our needs well into the future."

"Cincom's costs were worth the investment," Curran concluded. "Everything was within the budget [and] it was on time. I think it was really a great value for us. It was a tremendous cost savings and a tremendous saving in effort, too."