



Introduction to Accelerating the Journey from Mainframe to the Cloud

The Challenge

The nature of software implementation is transformation. For institutions, governments, and enterprises that rely heavily on mainframe systems this transformation begins by confronting their own legacy data landscape, attempting to understand the technology that shaped it, and recognizing that enterprise software is only as good as the data that it runs on. Bridging the vast gap between mainframes and the Cloud requires a complex and comprehensive data conversion and migration effort. Issues handling data will result in project delays, cost overruns, and resource burnout. If the migration from mainframe to the Cloud is incomplete or inaccurate, end users will lose confidence and fail to adopt the new system. Premier's mission is to remove data migration risk and our team has identified the following mainframe-specific technical considerations that must be made:

- Mainframe data must be converted from its native EBCDIC form to readable ASCII while simultaneously maintaining other complexities like packed-decimal formatting, binary fields, repeated segments, and Julian dates. Simply reading the data becomes its own conversion project, before any transformation work can begin.
- COBOL programming is inherently slow due to its verbosity, lack of structure, and poor modularity. As such, it is ill-equipped to handle the frequent specification changes and necessary short turnaround time during an implementation.
- Poor data quality abounds on mainframe systems because historically, they have not included the built-in validations and edits common on modern systems. This results in missing, inconsistent, and invalid data.
- The difficulties of COBOL programming together with poor data quality result in a mysterious and problematic data landscape – one that is difficult to understand in any comprehensive way. Consequently, programmers are forced to rely on incorrect assumptions, instead of facts, when developing conversion code.

Before the new system can go-live, data in the legacy systems must be consolidated, cleansed, converted, and transformed. Without the proper tools and approach, IT staff is tasked with clunky COBOL or RPG programming, file manipulations, and spreadsheet workarounds to prepare data for the Cloud. Consequently, less time is committed to training on the new system and other value-add activities like data quality initiatives, report building, and integrations.

PREMIER IN ACTION

One of the world's largest retailers wanted to implement a modern solution for Fixed Asset accounting. However, lack of understanding into their legacy mainframe solution was a major hurdle. Outside of COBOL copybooks, virtually no documentation existed and no-one was familiar with technical workings of the system beyond running the monthly reports. Premier leveraged the Applaud data migration platform to reverse engineer critical functionality, reveal how depreciation and appreciation rules were being applied, and develop a transformation program for 1 million assets.

Introduction to Applaud® Data Migration Services

The Tools

Premier International's approach is powered by our exclusive data migration software, Applaud. Applaud accelerates every step of the data conversion process using one team and one tool for data extraction, profiling, analysis, cleansing, transformation, and reconciliation. Leveraging our software and decades worth of experience solving the world's toughest data challenges, we circumvent the key problems specific to mainframe data migrations.

- Built-in conversion tools give our consultants the ability to read EBCDIC data without having to write a single line of code. Immediate access to data saves times and money, allowing research and conversion development to ramp up sooner in the project.
- Applaud's data repository quickly accommodates mainframe data sources making it possible to analyze mainframe files in relation to other sources in the data landscape, including ones that the mainframe system has never interfaced with. This makes formerly unsolvable problems – like duplicated master data across disparate systems – finally solvable.
- Comprehensive data profiling and analysis tools provide visibility into the mysteries buried in mainframe systems, leading to more focused requirements gathering efforts later in the project.

These tools have been optimized for the complex challenges of data migration. Naïve approaches rely on hand-coded extracts from individual mainframe files, conversion programs that are siloed based on source system or functional area, and COBOL programmers who are struggling to support data migration on top of their primary duties and training for the new system. To contrast, Premier uses Applaud to eliminate error prone and laborious hand-coding, provide a data repository with a holistic view of the data, and free up resources across the project.

The Results

Implementation is not just about getting to the Cloud. It's about getting there and building a better enterprise in the process. Premier's involvement allows the rest of the project team to focus on the future of their organization rather than be slowed down by data concerns and difficulties dealing with aging IT infrastructure and applications. By having an approach that immediately addresses the technical challenges inherent to mainframes, Premier can quickly graduate to impactful, value-adding activities as part of data conversion.

Every implementation is unique, but in each case quality data makes the difference between failure and resounding success. Premier's ability to directly extract and profile EBCDIC data without the need for additional resources or mainframe programming accelerates all downstream efforts and provides a 360 degree view of the data landscape. Direct benefits include merging duplicate vendors and enabling better payment terms and volume discounts to be negotiated, identifying inaccurate payroll deductions and missing benefits so that employees can be served more fairly, and automating address cleansing to eliminate wasted revenue on undeliverable mail. Premier's proven approach and the Applaud platform deliver a predictable, repeatable, and highly automated process that ensures the data migration is delivered on-time, on-budget, and with the highest quality data.

PREMIER IN ACTION

A 22.5 billion dollar industrial conglomerate needed to shut down a mainframe system that cost 200 thousand dollars a month to maintain. The last remaining mainframe resource was desperate to retire, but after weeks of attempts, issues converting binary and packed fields left him and his entire team at an impasse. Premier took the lead and directly extracted, converted, and loaded the data into the target warehouse in half the expected time. This saved the company hundreds of thousands of dollars and allowed our counterpart to triumphantly retire.