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Roger Peterson

VP, Information Systems

Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A

Kawasaki

Running lean through two decades of change and growth

Since 1986, Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A. has written all its online mainframe applications in PROIV.

By mid-2004, the company ran well over 2,000 PROIV-based applications, built and maintained by a small team of 15 developers. Throughout those two decades of change and growth, Kawasaki has extended and enhanced its mainframe viability, culminating in a painless upgrade to PROIV Version 5.

In IT terms, Kawasaki runs fast and super-lean: developing new applications quicker than its competitors – and for a fraction of the cost.

Powering-up America

Kawasaki's motorcycles, ATVs, Jet Ski® watercraft, utility vehicles and engines are legendary. They put the fun back into on- and off-road activities.

Turning over more than \$1bn a year in this fast-moving business demands continuous improvements in design and technology. Yet behind the chrome, oil, speed and success of Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A., there's a long-lasting and cost-effective element of continuity at its headquarters in Irvine, California.

A mainframe that moves with the times

Kawasaki's Irvine mainframe is the enduring hub of day-to-day business. It serves around 500 online company users, nearly 10,000 dealers plus consumers who collectively generate over 140,000 transactions each day.

The applications that process these transactions are written in PROIV. The company was an early convert to this easily-mastered development tool. After exhaustive testing in 1986, Kawasaki began a nearly two-decade programme of in-house application development.

It was a smart move. In the years that followed, many companies jettisoned their mainframes – but not Kawasaki.

"We never bought into the idea of the death of the mainframe," recalls Roger Peterson, Kawasaki's Vice President of Information Systems. "The difference is that our systems never fell behind the needs of the business. While others struggled, we continued to adapt and develop applications quickly and easily with PROIV."



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Low costs and rapid development

The flexibility and easy, forwards-and-backwards compatibility of PROIV still drive Kawasaki's IT strategy. After two decades of low-cost, rapid application development, Kawasaki's small development team of 15 manages well over 2,000 active applications.

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There's little IT wastage at Kawasaki. Roger and his colleagues had to justify every one of those 2,000-plus PROIV applications in terms of ROI. So successful has this hard-headed approach proven that, by 2004, the company had virtually built-out its ERP mainframe applications which it now adapts to changing business needs utilising PROIV.

Version 5 for mainframe opens up new possibilities

Luckily nothing stands still at PROIV. Version 5 for mainframe offers improved functionality across the board – and a painless upgrade path.

As usual, Kawasaki were first in the upgrade queue: "We had tremendous support from PROIV," says Kawasaki's Senior Systems Analyst, Kevin Coombs. "PROIV staff were with us on-site for three weeks, after which we ran our own testing for an additional three weeks."

"Luckily there's no need for a recompile with PROIV," he explains. "Out of more than 2,000 applications, only about 50 needed any intervention. As a result, the upgrade went through far faster than any of us expected."

"PROIV continues to give us an edge over our competitors," adds Roger Peterson. "We can build applications faster than they can and, because so much of our system is supported by PROIV, our portfolio remains viable longer."

"New features, such as the graphical user interface, ensure that we can continue to adapt to the needs of our users and customers," says Roger. "When change comes, we're ready for it."

links: www.kawasaki.com