



db4o | The Open Source Object Database | Java and .Net

db4o Enhances Postbank's Mobile Field Force Application

By Hailey Lynne McKeefry

Postbank AG, the leading German retail bank, wanted to unleash its sales force from their desks in order to allow them serve its customers better wherever they were. By leveraging the db4o open-source object database from db4objects, the bank was able to offer these salespeople a decentralized system that mirrored its centralized, Web-based SAP persistent system as they were on the road visiting customers.

Postbank had identified its outbound sales force as a critical component of its growth strategy. The bank has acquired the 850 largest branches from Deutsche Post AG and created a mobile sales team of more than 4,000 consultants. The bank, which sells financial products and insurance, counts on these outside sales people to sell its products to its 14.6 million domestic customers. Unfortunately, these same salespeople were often limited by a lack of access to important information, especially data housed in the company's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. "Connection problems made it hard for them to do their job," said Horst Hartberger, Technical Project Leader at Postbank. "We wanted to create a simple system to help these people."

Initially, Postbank selected db4o as its solution of choice because it could be implemented quickly and was easy enough to use that it didn't require time-consuming training to get the users up and running. It realized that db4o would allow it to readily interface with the home-grown and packaged applications being used by its sales force. "We needed an easy-to-use database which didn't require a long ramp up period and which allowed us to get our application rolled out as soon as possible," said Hartberger. "We evaluated and compared different solutions but nothing came close to db4o in terms of ease of implementation and performance."

During its comparative testing of potential products, db4o proved to provide superior performance compared to the other embedded, but relational database products that the company was considering. "db4o was noticeably faster and remained stable with the amount of memory we were using," said Hartberger. In addition, the program does not require runtime administration.



With 14.6 million domestic customers, approximately 22,000 employees and total assets of €190 billion, Deutsche Postbank Group (www.postbank.com) is one of Germany's major financial services providers. Its focus is on retail business with private customers.

It is also active in the corporate banking sector. In its "Transaction Banking" division, it performs back office services for other financial services providers. Deutsche Postbank AG went public in June 2004. Since September 2006 Postbank is listed in the DAX German share index. The majority shareholder is Deutsche Post AG.

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In addition, the database provided a small footprint, which was important since the salespeople didn't want to cannibalize all of the assets of their notebook computers with a single application. db4o reduces complexity and resource consumption by eliminating the tools and code necessary for object-relational mapping. "We were looking for a local database that doesn't use too much space on the computer," said Hartberger. "db4o offered excellent performance compared to the other systems we considered and didn't take too many resources to run."

Today, its sales people have a choice of using either the offline version (using db4objects' database) or the online version of the system. "All of the salespeople can use both systems," said Hartberger. "We've written a script that allows them to choose which system they want at login."

Since its initial implementation, Postbank has evolved how it hopes to use the system. Initially, the bank envisioned a system that would be completely temporary and would allow users to upload data to the main system as needed. However, the need for encryption and the complexities of migrating data has forced them to adopt a system where the data is maintained on the local machine in db4o.

About db4objects

db4o is driven by the world's largest community of its kind, with 25,000 registered Java and .NET developers and counting. The product has been downloaded over 1,000,000 times and been deployed successfully in transportation, networks, natural sciences, industrial, consumer, and enterprise applications. Users and customers of db4o currently come from 170 different countries, from Albania to Zimbabwe, and range from world-class leaders like Boeing, Bosch, Intel, Ricoh, and Seagate to a wide range of highly innovative start-up companies. Built on new object database technology, db4o is currently the only database that is native to both Java and .NET offering a wide array of unique, object-oriented database functionalities: Its object-oriented replication (dRS), its object-oriented queries (Native Queries, QbE, S.O.D.A.), and the ObjectManager GUI for browsing object database files are unmatched in the database world.

db4o Key Benefits:

- Performance
- Low memory overhead
- Ease of use
- Stability
- Excellent Support