MFP implements Virtel to create a **dialog between a WebsPhere portal and a CICS application**

THE CUSTOMER

MFP Services results from the merge of 3 different French public services (administrative, territorial and hospital).

THE CHALLENGE

To improve the quality of its services, MFP needed to create a new secure WebSphere portal featuring a modern user interface and new interactive services, in order to:

• Track medical expenses and reimbursements

• Electronically deliver account balance reports in PDF format

• Grant access to personal data such as insurance coverage, contract beneficia-ries, primary physician, and account-administration data

• Locate insurance-approved medical professionals and health-care facilities

• Provide general information about health care system processes

• Grant access to health care recommendations data sheets

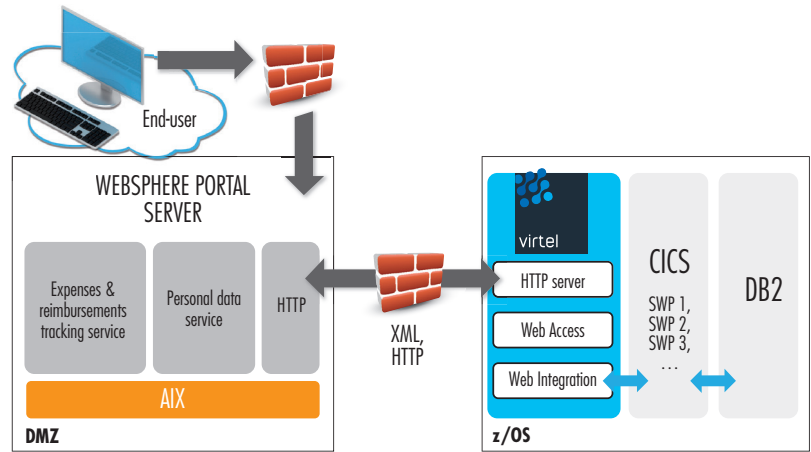• Contact insurance administration representatives.

Technically, MFP needed the existing CICS COBOL transactions to access host-based DB2 data from the new WebSphere portal, using Web Services and open-standard technology for long term viability and scalability purposes.

THE SOLUTION

After reviewing several solutions, MFP chose SysperTec's Virtel Web Integration. Dynamic protocol converter that combines a VTAM relay with an HTTP server, Virtel runs on z/OS systems as a started task. It communicates with the WebSphere portal using a secure URL and open-standard languages (XML , HTTP) while concurrently invoking 3270 transactions that will access host-based data.

In short, Virtel can make any 3270 application mimic one or several Web Services.

"Thanks to Virtel, developing and implementing web services is simple and smooth. Developers don't need both mainframe and web skills, they do not work outside the limits of their technical expertise" states the Host Project Implementation Architect at MFP. Indeed, it took their mainframe developers only a day and a half of training to start programming their own Virtel-based web services. No web skills were ever required of them.

Meanwhile, the WebSphere team was able to develop the new portal without worrying about the CICS processing: they simply had to issue their web service queries as parameterized URLs. No particular mainframe skills were needed of them.

THE RESULTS

Deploying their new interactive WebSphere portal has allowed MFP to improve the quality of the services it delivers, and to be much more reactive when responding to the needs of insurance beneficiaries. Furthermore, the chosen technology allows handling all industry changes (whether government mandated or institutional) and deploying them to insurance beneficiaries, much faster than before.

"The solution was implemented very quickly and met all our timeframe, technology and budget requirements. During the opening month, traffic on our new portal improved by 61%. It has since served an average of 125,000 visitors per month, and users have expressed their satisfaction at once. Improving our services increases our existing members' trust, while adding new services boosts our image and value, thus attracting new ones." concludes MFP's Architecture Manager.