



## *Safety Insurance maintains winning advantage with VisualAge*

*Move to Java is transparent with IBM® VisualAge® RPG*

Boston-based Safety Insurance Group is the third largest insurer in Massachusetts today. But, it has its sights set on quickly becoming number one, by offering superior customer service. How? By giving its network of 600 independent agents state-of-the-art tools using VisualAge RPG. Safety Insurance is using VisualAge RPG to develop client/server applications for agents and then move them rapidly onto the Web.

*The result:* lower costs to support agents, faster claims settlement and improved customer service.

### **The fast track to AS/400® client/server development**

It all started in 1993, when client/server computing really began to take off. Safety Insurance Group had already begun to build more powerful call center applications to support its agents. Then, it saw an opportunity to move these applications right onto its agents' desktops. The challenge was to

find the right tools, while leveraging its prior investments in RPG development and IBM AS/400 technology.

Kurt Johnson, Application Development Manager, recalls, "Our developers had anywhere from five to 25 years' experience with RPG. VisualAge RPG was a natural choice for our development environment to extend our applications into the client/server world. The learning curve was so short, within a couple of months we were able to build a small client/server application. Before, when we had tried using C++, our developers weren't proficient even six months after training."

"In the RPG green-screen world, you're working in a procedural environment," explains Eric Pente, Senior Programmer Analyst. "With VisualAge RPG, you simply have to understand the workings of graphical components. Once you grasp the basics, the learning curve is very fast."

Johnson's team rolled out the initial call center application in 1994 to 10 beta sites. Two years later, the team launched 12 client/server agent inquiry applications to 2,000 CSR's at 500 locations. All modules were written in VisualAge RPG, including:

- Billing inquiry
- Policy inquiry
- Claims inquiry

and more. Then, in 1997, the company initiated a client/server policy entry system as well. These applications are now virtually complete. They allow agents

<b>Industry</b>	Insurance
<b>Application</b>	Agent inquiry and Agent data entry
<b>Software</b>	IBM VisualAge RPG DB2 Universal Database for AS/400, OS/400

to enter claim information, record payments to insured customers, enter receipts for payments and perform other administrative tasks. Agents accessed the entire suite of inquiry and data entry applications via a secure frame relay network.

The benefits? Fewer calls from agents to the Safety Insurance customer service centre, resulting in substantial cost savings. In addition, agents are able to offer improved service to insured customers. With the client/server applications, when a call comes in, a complete picture of the customer's account pops up on the agent desktop – including a record of any phone calls or work on their file, as well as details of their coverage.

Most important, because accurate information is instantly available, claims can be settled more quickly. If a customer has an auto claim, appraisers will receive notice within hours and can proceed to assess the damage as quickly as possible. "It means we can take customer service to another level," says Johnson.



## **The fast track to Java™ in the AS/400 world**

That's just the beginning. Safety Insurance is now using VisualAge RPG to support its move into e-business. Its first project is to Web-enable all its agent data entry applications. For example, an agent will be able to enter claim information via the Internet. The company will give its agents free Internet access to tap into these applications via a secure AS/400e™ server.

"We Java-enabled all our agent inquiry modules without writing any Java code," says Pente. "It was all done through the compiler within VisualAge RPG. In terms of the language, the move from RPG to Java was transparent. It's the fastest way to make the move."

And, that's not all. Soon, agents will be able to call up third-party applications directly through an Agent Virtual Community, now in beta.

For example, say an insurance claim arrives that involves an auto glass provider. The agent will be able to link automatically to that party's Web site and request a quote. The system will prefill the necessary information automatically, drawing on the data the agent has already entered. Rekeying or paper records will no longer be necessary.

Moving forward, Safety Insurance Group is committed to using Java for all new development projects. According to Johnson, "VisualAge RPG gives us a fast track to Java while we continue to leverage our investment in AS/400 skills and technology. No one has applications that come anywhere close to ours. We have agents who come to us to sell our products largely because of our technology. Our goal is to put it all together for our agents in a user-friendly, responsive Web environment."

He adds: "Our long-term goal is to become the preferred auto insurer in the state. We want to be recognized as the best at taking care of our insured customers. We're succeeding quickly, largely due to our reputation for customer service. That comes down to the excellence of our people and the technology support we give them so they can exceed the expectations of our insured customers."

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