

*“MSS Exceeded Our Expectations over and over again”*

## **AAR Corporation Migrates with the Help of MSS**

**It is not easy to switch over from a mainframe environment to a Unix system. Nevertheless, increasingly more companies choose such a migration path. The reasons underlying this, vary. However, MSS International, an IBM Business Partner, is credited with a large number of successful migrations. The experiences that were gained from these cases appear to be informative to companies that contemplate such a step. This also applies to AAR Corporation.**

AAR Corporation is one of the world's leading suppliers of aeroplane parts. The company has 40 establishments in 12 countries in which 2800 employees occupy themselves with providing parts for airline companies and numerous other activities that are related to aviation directly or indirectly. That is why AAR has establishments in London, New York and Amsterdam in which over 22,000 different types of aeroplane parts are repaired, revised and maintained. Obviously, such a large company characterises itself by a complex IT environment. Mike Goettsch is a project manager and he knows the recent migration history like the back of his hand. “Within AAR Corporation we used to have a Unisys mainframe environment. However, about ten years ago the management decided to switch over to an open system that is based on Unix. To cut a long story short: in those days we chose to switch over to an Oracle database that ran under Unisys Unix, with Unisys itself assisting us to migrate our software. Our establishment in Oklahoma City was the pilot. Everything went fine - we therefore also completed the migration in our other establishments. Amsterdam/Hoofddorp was the last in line. That was in 1997.”

### **Millennium Bug**

All is well that ends well? Goettsch continues: “At first we were quite satisfied. Nevertheless, a number of questions turned up. In the first place we had to deal with the millennium bug. Our systems were not Y2K compatible. Secondly, the Unix version we had, had some disadvantages. It was not open so we could not freely choose from the range of Unix software that was available on the market. That extremely limited our possibilities. If you have an open Unix version, you can easily search the market for a suitable product in case of any IT question. Closed versions require their own implementations or custom-made software. To put it briefly: it was quite a fuss. We noticed that when some difficulties arose in Chicago. It appeared that our existing systems could not solve these. Finally, in case of bug fixes or new releases for our Oracle database, the Unisys Unix was always last in line. These updates are available for other versions much sooner. All in all, this led to a reconsideration of our previous decision. We decided to migrate to an open Unix version of HP and contacted MSS International for this.

### **Shadow System**

MSS accepted the challenge and assisted AAR Corporation in its global migration. A duplicate of AAR's IT environment and the accompanying database was set up in MSS's establishment in Britain. The migration was prepared on this duplicate so that the many failures that just come to light in a migration project were found and solved even before the actual migration was started. In close cooperation with AAR's experts, MSS' Employees hunted for failures. In each case the database on the shadow system was compared with the 'live version' in the existing environment. As soon as inconsistencies came to light, these were reported back and forth, and were registered, investigated and solved. The new system could be delivered to the customer only if it worked properly. “The cooperation went surprisingly well,” says Goettsch. “I led a group of testers who did nothing more than search

the migration for failures. MSS was in the UK, we were in the US. Despite the time difference, they kept on working. To us here in Chicago it appeared as if they worked 24 hours a day. Whenever I arrived at my desk in the morning, I found new solutions to the questions that were found. Sometimes we even reported fifteen problems to MSS in the UK at the same time. After this, it was quiet for a couple of days, but then a pile of solutions came in simultaneously. And *all* questions we found were solved eventually.”

**Amazing**

Goettsch recapitulates: “On 1 January 1999, Amsterdam, New York and Oklahoma City still ran the old, not millennium proof systems. It was around that time we called in MSS. As soon as in May MSS delivered the first tested systems, ready for implementation. The result was that the switchover was completed in November 1999. Or in other words: they took on three conversions *plus* the millennium bugs and still they completed everything in good time. “MSS exceeded our expectations over and over again.” In all fairness, MSS did more than we could expect. MSS can make any required migration technology available, including the self developed, automated migration tools. It is amazing how much migration knowledge and expertise they possess.”