

# ORBACUS™ PROVIDES REAL BUSINESS PROCESS AUTOMATION



“Many of our business applications are solutions bought in from third parties. This is an efficient approach only if the necessary systems can all talk to each other. CORBA is an excellent way to fulfill integration requirements like this and, with Orbacus, IONA provides a first-class implementation that is a fundamental link in our business operations.”

- Richard Dunlop, Technical Services Group, Gulf International Bank (UK)

## BUSINESS PROFILE

GULF INTERNATIONAL BANK  
Middle Eastern Investment Bank

INDUSTRY  
Finance

IONA PRODUCTS  
Orbacus v4.1

## BENEFITS

- Increased business efficiency
- Time-saving solution
- Standards-based integration
- Cost-efficient product



Gulf International Bank (GIB) is a leading investment bank in the Middle East. Its principal focus is on the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states. With a proven track record spanning 25 years, GIB provides client-led, innovative financial products and services. Its client base includes major private-sector corporations, Gulf-based financial institutions, multinational companies active in the region, and the governments of the GCC states.

Headquartered in the Kingdom of Bahrain, GIB was established in 1975, and commenced operations in 1976. The six GCC governments own 72.5 per cent of the bank, while the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) and J.P. Morgan Overseas Capital Corporation own 22.2 per cent and 5.3 per cent respectively.

At the end of 2001, GIB had total assets worth US\$15.2 billion and shareholders' equity of US\$1.2 billion. In 1999, GIB acquired the London-based Saudi International Bank, which has subsequently been renamed Gulf International Bank (UK) Limited. GIB has branches in London, New York, and Riyadh, in addition to representative offices in Beirut and Abu Dhabi.

GIB buys third-party applications to manage many of its business processes. Many of these applications use an Orbacus-based framework to communicate with each other, so GIB can manage entire business processes regardless of the number of disparate systems involved.

## REGIONAL REPUTATION

GIB offers a wide range of services to its clients. It has a reputation for flexibility and quality of customer service. For GIB to offer flexible investment plans to its clients, it needs to have flexible and efficient internal business processes. This requires the systems and IT infrastructure to support diverse business processes. GIB (UK) employs approximately 250 staff, so it does not have the large IT resources of bigger financial institutions. Also, it does not have the transaction volumes to warrant large-scale development of proprietary business applications. For this reason, GIB buys third-party products for its front-office applications and its back-office business systems.

Using many third-party business systems is the most cost-efficient way for GIB to support its operations. However, the problem with this approach is that all the different applications stand alone, and do not necessarily connect with each other. This can lead to some time-consuming, labor-intensive ways to work around the communication problem, such as importing and exporting data between applications, or paper-based business processes. This often compounds the problem rather than solving it, as there are inherent errors in manual data processing. Often the data format in one system may not match that in another. This leads to the maintenance of data mappings outside the core

applications, which adds more inefficiency to the process. GIB decided that the best way to connect its systems was to use a distributed technology that would link the applications together.

"There are many cost benefits to using non-proprietary software for business applications. We reduce our overall IT costs, but we then have the hidden costs of inefficient office processes. Moving data around the company on spreadsheets and paper is not the answer, so we decided to use a CORBA-based framework to link the applications and make data more readily available throughout the organization," said Mr Dunlop.

## TIMELY INTEGRATION

In 1998, GIB began a project to integrate business-critical applications, and provide a framework for future system integration. This framework uses Orbacus and Java to connect eight disparate systems, which manage critical aspects of GIB's business. Orbacus links front-office applications to the back-office databases for many areas of GIB's business, such as trading, reconciliation, and reporting.

The Orbacus-based framework automates such tasks as data transfer, data mapping, file functions, and data export. GIB saves time and resources by connecting the systems in this way. GIB staff do not need to spend their time moving data around the company manually, and can use their time to focus on revenue-generating activities and customer service. Information flows more freely throughout the bank, and is more accurate, as all the processing and mapping is handled automatically by the framework and Orbacus.

One of the most important tasks performed by the Orbacus framework is the data feed to the regulatory reporting system. Every financial institution must submit reports to the FSA. These reports are evidence to show that the company is operating legally and has no discrepancies in its trading figures. Because there have been numerous scandals in the industry in recent years, financial institutions need to provide more regular reports. Compiling the required information for the reports is a major task for all sizes of organization. Data needs to be retrieved from many parts of the business and submitted in the correct format. Orbacus allows GIB to gather the information automatically from all over the organization, regardless of the system on which it resides.

"Our Orbacus-based framework has been a great success. We've integrated many systems, and have automated many processes. The biggest benefit has been the regulatory reporting mechanism. In today's climate we need to provide these reports with increased frequency and accuracy. Orbacus allows us to automate the whole reporting process across our entire operation," said Mr Dunlop.

## PROVEN TRACK RECORD

GIB decided to use CORBA to connect its business systems because it needed to integrate Sun and Microsoft technologies. CORBA is the standards-based way to achieve this integration. Cost was a very important factor for GIB while evaluating CORBA implementations. IONA's Orbacus provided all the functionality required by GIB. It also evaluated JacORB, which is a free Java implementation of the CORBA standard. Although cost was an important factor for GIB, it did not want to risk using a product for which it had no direct support from the vendor. GIB considered using a third-party to support its use of JacORB, but decided the most cost-effective and reliable solution was to use IONA and Orbacus. IONA's reputed standing as the market-leading CORBA vendor, sealed GIB's decision.

"The cost of the solution was critical. We considered JacORB, but we would have had to engage with a third party and pay support costs, and that was not a viable option. IONA has an excellent support organization that was very helpful during our project," said Mr Dunlop.

## CONNECTING TECHNOLOGIES

The Orbacus framework is deployed on a Solaris cluster and Windows NT machines hosting GIB's business applications. The cluster allows for fail-over and disaster recovery. CORBA services are deployed on each Solaris and NT machine, which allows the framework to connect to each of the business applications. All security and administration is controlled from the Solaris machine. In the case of the regulatory reporting data feed, the system is triggered each night to gather the required reporting information from each of the associated business applications. The data is then sent to the reporting system. The entire process is automated by Orbacus.

"We've automated many tasks within our organization with Orbacus. We had very few technical problems, all of which were resolved quickly by IONA. Overall, working with IONA has been a very good experience," said Mr Dunlop.

## PRODUCTS

Orbacus is a fully CORBA compliant ORB (Object Request Broker) that is distributed as source code. It is intended for organizations needing a customizable high-quality, high-performance ORB. Orbacus users routinely extend the standard product by porting it to new platforms, linking it to non-standard transports, developing new ORB services, or otherwise customizing the ORB to meet their precise needs.

Orbacus is available in two language versions: C++ and Java. Orbacus 4.1, the current version of Orbacus, is a fully CORBA 2.4 compliant ORB. It offers support for such advanced features as the Portable Object Adaptor (POA) and Objects by Value (OBV). Orbacus also supports some of the features in the upcoming CORBA 3 standard, including Portable Interceptors.

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