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## **Agile COBOL Systems – a Contradiction in Terms?**

“COBOL experts desperately needed” is not at all a farfetched title to appear in the employment columns. The number of COBOL experts is rapidly dwindling, and maintaining these systems is increasingly becoming a challenge. The business rules system visual rules is the only system of its kind which supports COBOL applications and enables the expertise embedded in these systems to be maintained even when employees leave a company. As of now, companies interested in evaluating the Eclipse Plug-in for own use or partnering can download visual rules for COBOL at: [www.visual-rules.com](http://www.visual-rules.com)

### **Immenstaad (Germany), August 4th, 2004 –**

About 200.000.000.000 lines of COBOL code are currently in use, and Gartner estimates that this number will increase by 5 billion each year. COBOL outdated? Far from it.

The planned deployment of COBOL code goes hand in hand with a drastic decrease in the number of those who can support these systems. Gartner mentions a decrease of 13 % per year. This in effect means that the cost of maintaining each line of COBOL code rises - on a yearly basis.

### **Agile Systems are Cost-Effective**

Companies are even now faced with the challenge of keeping their existing systems agile and simultaneously reducing costs. Is this at all possible? Can companies maintain their competitive edge and continue using COBOL systems?

### **The First Rule System for the COBOL World**

From an economical perspective, preserving the knowledge nested in the systems has the highest priority. On the basis of this principle, Innovations Softwaretechnologie has for years been offering a business rule system with which the business logic and the application logic are strictly kept apart – even in COBOL systems. With its help companies can quickly adapt the business logic in their applications in response to changing market conditions, customer requirements, or judicial statutes, and to maintain their competitive edge.

For companies who will also in the future rely on their existing COBOL systems, this means: Even when employees leave the company, the business logic will remain maintainable. Moreover, when systems have to be migrated to „modern“ environments, Innovations' rule system will aid in extracting the business logic as core of the existing applications. It could then immediately be used in the new environment. The rule system visual rules achieves this by automatically generating COBOL and Java code from the business logic models. In both of these scenarios – in

either preserving existing systems, or in migrating them – there clearly is a tremendous potential for saving costs!

### **In Use at a German Home Loan Bank**

The Bausparkasse Schwäbisch Hall (a German home loan bank) is already enjoying the advantages of employing these features in their productive systems. In the areas of client data management and the flexible control of consecutive processes, rule models with each containing up to 500 decision nodes are in use. In the powerful client data management system of the home lone bank, these rule models enable rule based data enrichment when content is updated. And if the laws governing the acquisition of client data should change, the changes can then promptly be implemented in the rule model and be used in the application. About 100.000 lines of COBOL source code have so far been automatically generated with the rule technology of Innovations.

The rules for updating the content can quite easily be traced in the rule models. Errors can furthermore be quickly located and corrected. And as an important side-benefit, the traceability guarantees that sensitive processes such as migrating client accounts can be audited.

Walter Hocke, the project manager in charge at the home lone bank, reports: "Today, if we need to change the processing logic of our systems, with the help of Innovations' rule system we can do this significantly faster than what used to be possible. For many of our processes it is vitally important that there exists a way to audit them. The rule models of Innovations help us to meet these requirements, since the models are easy to understand and the processing logic is well-documented."

As of now, a free evaluation version of visual rules for COBOL can be downloaded at: [www.visual-rules.com](http://www.visual-rules.com)

75 lines with 60 characters per line

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#### About Innovations Softwaretechnologie

Innovations Softwaretechnologie specializes in developing intelligent rule based systems as well as distributed, network-enabled enterprise applications. In both areas, Innovations occupies a top position in the technology sector. Based on many years of experience, the company offers its clients extensive consultation, software design and development, as well as products to efficiently create such solutions.

The solidly growing company - headquartered in Immenstaad on the shores of Lake Constance - employs more than 70 highly qualified computer scientists and engineers as of today. In the areas of retail, banking, and insurance, Innovations works for leading large-scale companies in Europe, such as Rewe, Quelle, Metro, the Zürcher Kantonalbank and Cortal Consors.