



## Pathway Post Office

Athene at the heart of Pathway Post Office Automation Project

"Without Athene's capacity planning and performance management capabilities, the Pathway system would grind to a halt."

The Pathway Project as run by Fujitsu Services (formerly known as ICL) to automate the Post Office network throughout the UK went live in June 1999. NT-based systems with touch screens and specific post office applications software were rolled out at the rate of 330 post offices each week to all 17,561 post offices; 37,996 individual systems and scanners were installed to serve each counter position. The Post Office network conducts about two billion transactions each year, with a turnover of £120 bn per annum.

All the individual post offices and sub-post offices are linked (via ISDN or satellite) to two fully disaster tolerant central data centres based on Sun and Sequent Unix systems, in Wigan and Bootle.

James Stinchcombe, Distinguished Engineer, Fujitsu Services commented: "We recognized right at the start of the project that given the complexity of the system, its business critical nature and level of transactions, that we needed to proactively monitor and manage its performance."



"We looked at products from a number of suppliers and selected Athene from Metron, primarily because of its flexibility and scalability."

"Athene would allow us to collect performance data from a number of different systems, using different tools and in a range of different formats."

"We could then import all this disparate data into Athene in order to produce a single, consistent, comprehensive and integrated management and reporting system."

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## Filled to Capacity at Cornhill



When Roy Cawthra joined the Cornhill Group in March 2001 as Technical Services Manager, he was taking on a big job. With some 2,500 users located throughout the UK, his responsibilities included all hardware and software requirements, design and standards for the desktop environment, email systems, disaster recovery, change management, performance management and capacity planning. The latter area of responsibility quickly rose to the top of his agenda when he was faced with strident complaints from users about response times on the company's main business application (the claims system known as Coronet)

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Metron undertook to develop new versions of Athene to handle the demands of the Pathway project, to provide additional reporting capabilities and to work with Tivoli. Athene was also enhanced to work with Riposte, the application used by Fujitsu Services to run the counter systems.

Metron's Athene Acquire product will be used to collect data from the individual post offices for sample reporting, whilst Athene Monitor provides a real-time display of performance metrics on any of the remote systems. The Fujitsu Services support team can use this

information to remotely monitor and manage the effect of instructions and fixes, which they may give to local users.

James Stinchcombe: "Athene is performing very well and provides an extremely rapid way of identifying problems. With a system of this magnitude and complexity, it is absolutely essential to have Athene to filter the data and provide trending information."

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The Pathway project to automate the entire UK Post Office network represents one of the largest IT contracts ever awarded. The network is larger than all the main UK banks and building societies combined and is one of the largest and most secure in Europe. Banking services will be provided in post offices from 2003 onwards.

In addition, Athene is monitoring a major data warehouse facility. □

Metron's Athene is being used to monitor and manage the performance of four key central systems within the Pathway project.

- **Correspondent (or network) servers:**  
These handle communication with the individual post offices and maintain a 35 day history of all the data to provide essential back up if a post office is out of commission for any reason.
- **Application servers:**  
These convert the data from the correspondent servers and pass into the Oracle databases.
- **VPN servers:**  
These run various encrypted data applications.
- **Sequent servers:**  
These run Oracle databases.

In the future, the use of Athene will be extended and used on an 'exception basis' to monitor individual counter systems.

## Hands on Experience

Metron is hosting a series of workshops offering a day's 'hands-on' experience with Athene. Suitable for both users of the software and those interested in seeing the product in more detail. Please see the web site or contact [sally.thorne@metron.co.uk](mailto:sally.thorne@metron.co.uk)

## Avoid Wastage!

According to Gartner, 20% of the average company's IT budget is wasted, with over-specified hardware cited as one of the three key reasons for this. Users of Athene – of course - avoid this pitfall.

## UKCMG 2004 - Metron on-stage

UKCMG, held this year in Oxford, is one example of CMG's regional group meetings. This year's event comprised of a conference, speakers and a small exhibition. The main themes were Storage, Service management, ITIL, Web Services, Mainframe and Capacity Planning. One of the papers presented was 'Introduction to ITIL. It's not big and it's not clever' by Metron's Andrew Smith and Keith Digby.

## Cornhill *continued*

caused by frequent periods of 100% utilization on the Hitachi Data Systems (HDS) mainframe.

As a firm believer in the importance of performance monitoring and capacity planning, and with hands-on experience of using specialist tools, Roy Cawthra commissioned Metron to undertake a performance management study in June 2001 using their Athene software. He said:

"The report produced by Metron was excellent and formed a major part of the documentation which I had to produce for senior management at Cornhill to justify the investment in an upgrade."

"In addition, modelling of the different options using Athene proved that we could upgrade our existing HDS system rather than having to invest in new mainframe technology. The upgrade cost us less than a tenth of the amount which would have been required to move to new technology."

Cornhill has since gone on to purchase Athene. The system is used to produce monthly reports which are given to senior management to provide information on the performance of the systems and utilization of the mainframe. Roy Cawthra: "Athene is working very well. The introduction of regular monthly reports, which can be understood by those who are not actively involved in everyday systems work, is very valuable. Now that the reports are regular, rather than being produced for specific needs, we can track exceptions and take the necessary action." □