

Legacy Modernization With Rocket Software

Mark Schroeder Interviews Greg Mummah



Greg Mummah

Greg Mummah has more than 15 years of experience with legacy modernization. He has designed and implemented modernization solutions for mainframe, IBM I, and open VMS applications that provide mission-critical functionality to some of the world's largest organizations. In his current role as product manager for Rocket/Seagull, Greg is responsible for product design, sales and marketing, and occasionally on-site solution implementation.

[Rocket Software](#) is a global software development firm that builds and services enterprise infrastructure products for the world's leading OEMs, networks and software companies and enterprises. The company's products complement and extend strategic infrastructure in the areas of: application modernization, business intelligence, compliance and security, consumer productivity, database servers, database tools, file transfer, mainframe productivity, network management, publishing and search, SOA and integration, storage management, terminal emulation, and text mining.

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Mark Schroeder: Greg, can you give me a brief over view of your experience in modernization?

Greg Mummah: I've personally been working in the modernization stage for about fifteen years. I started out as actually a customer of Seagull and we giving their GUI/400 products. I joined Seagull about 12 years ago and in essence my experience overall is probably about 15 years and most of that, the early years were spent with AS/400 but in about the last six or seven years, I have also adopted the mainframe and mini Unix platform as things that we modernize. So I've had a lot of experience with those now as well.

Mark Schroeder: There's several different ways to modernize applications, does Seagull have a specific approach that they use most regularly?

Greg Mummah: We do, there are three primary approaches and the first one is re-use, so we using the existing assets, that's the approach that we take. There are also the lift and shift options which is really to take code and put it on another platform and then there is the replacement option which to me really just means all together taking the system and developing new business requirements and removing the platforms and applications altogether and replacing it with something new. But we focus on the re-use approach, we think it's the fastest time to market in terms of the solution and its usually the cheapest and it's also least disruptive to an organization because you are just taking advantage of the assets that you already have rather than introducing something that's new and potentially unknown for the people at the business and the IT community.

Mark Schroeder: With the re-use option, you can actually keep your same application and keep developing it just like you are and just modernize the new screens as they come around can't you?

Greg Mummah: Yes, exactly.

Mark Schroeder: Most people consider J-walk as a screen scraper, how has it matured over the years?

Greg Mummah: I think, the comments that J-walk is a screen scraper from the core functional perspective is still true, we still leverage the existing screen and application, and by the way, we call the product LegaSuite GUI now and it influences more than the 400 that also deals with the mainframe and UNIX as I mentioned. But you know, the core of building an application with a GUI solution is really about taking an existing application and making it do new things, do things that you can't do today whether that is do to the platform or the design of an application or some other factor. But, I mean we don't run away from the assertion that we are screen scraping I think that's very much what that particular product line does and it's very good at it, we've had over 20 years of experience doing it now, so definitely I think that we feel comfortable in that role.

Mark Schroeder: It sounds like since you've gotten into the main frame in the UNIX world as well, you could potentially have an application that suits on multiple platforms and present all three environments in one set of screens is that right?

Greg Mummah: That's absolutely right, and I think that's where you know, extending beyond the individual screens really comes into play. As we started to go into these other platform environments we discovered that there were a lot of non screen best ways to get to application logic. In the mainframe there is a method called com area for example, of course there is direct database access and you know a wide variety of ways

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to get to business logic, as we have built out the product, we have moved beyond the screen but we have really done it using methods that are supported by the existing platforms that we access, so the end result is we can take business logic from any one or all of those platforms or data from a database and combine it at a user layer where the user can work with that information as one thing, as one unit work.

Mark Schroeder: Integration like that is an important thing this is too?

Greg Mummah: Yes, absolutely

Mark Schroeder: A lot of companies have a wide variety of applications and they need to have some central way to get to it all.

Greg Mummah: Definitely, I mean, I think our LegaSuite GUI is really geared at organizations that are multi –platforms and they need to share information, whether that's at the user phase or from an integration perspective like SOA integration. That's really probably our sweetest spot, it's going to be somebody that is multi-platform and has a need to make that information be provided together whether that's in interface SOA ware or from the user perspective.

Mark Schroeder: You have other tools the company promotes also, do those all integrate together, for example can you take a windows application in your AS/400 or IBMI application and a main frame application and work with all of them together ,integrate the tools you use together?

Greg Mummah: Yes we can. You know the specifics for each one of those could depend on what the customer is looking for, but at a high level we can take say functionality out of a windows application for example and publish it as a SOA service, then we could take an AS/400 green screen application and front end the actual screens

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from that, then we could pull the service in from the windows application and actually make it available for use in re faced AS/400 application, so that's just one example, but it's fairly typical for I think where we want to go in the market place.

Mark Schroeder: What's the final application server that you're looking at? Do you have people use Linux, Windows, what server do they normally publish their actual web pages on that you produce?

Greg Mummah: We are very much what I'll call platform neutral, we don't like to mandate any particular application server in the deployment environment, so we look at the application of standards instead, the Java application server for example there are some standard ways that you can drop the functionality and deploy it in an ear or a war file for example if you are dealing with a J2ee app server so what we try to do is create a run time that will work in any one of the environments that are out there and are really standard today, SharePoint, WebSphere, all of the Apache line of things like tomcat, the apache portal server. We try to focus on the standard rather than the specific platform because you know, frankly no two customers are alike, they all do it a little different .We like to be able to fit in whatever their infrastructure is.

Mark Schroeder: It seems like a good approach because then as their infrastructure changes they can modify what they produce then to fit their new infrastructure.

Greg Mummah: That's correct

Mark Schroeder: Right, so they can move forward and have a good application for the future.

Greg Mummah: Right, I mean in fact often they don't even have to change our stuff to deploy it into a different environment, it's simply a matter of configuring and deploying differently, there's usually no development work or very little development work involved in making a major deployment change if they want to switch from WebSphere to Microsoft IIS or Sharepoint for example.

Mark Schroeder: Do you deploy in both JAVA and .Net versions or is it just the java version that you deploy on?

Greg Mummah: No, we deploy in both environments, we can with our integration products, we can create Java command beans and .Net assemblies and that's all done in a single development effort. So you build your service in our work bench and you basically select all of the options you want to publish that to, we have .Net, we have java, we have XML messaging, we have portals, there's a variety of different ways to get functionality out to the user and the idea behind our tooling is really that you should have to do the work only once to make an interface available for all those different platforms or environments.

Mark Schroeder: Interesting. You mentioned portlets can you create a standard java portlet.

Greg Mummah: Yes, we have customers that JSR168 today and there's a couple of standards that have emerged since then, WSRP is really what I understand to be the latest one or what we understand to be the latest one. So with the product coming out in fall, we will support WSRP, so as the standards of evolves, we try to evolve ourselves along with them.

Mark Schroeder: And there's no recoding for the customer to fit into those new standards is there?

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Greg Mummah: Right, it will become a new publish option. So you know the upgraded product when you get a hold of that you can now publish an API as a WSRP for example. So as you buy the upgrade you would simply take whatever it was you built, the transaction for example and publish it as a WSRP standard. So the only re-work will be basically going into the work bench and saying OK now I want a WSRP interface for all of the stuff that I just did and away you go.

Mark Schroeder: In the application development cycle, there's a lot of different steps that go on. Does Rocket fit into all these steps or is it just something that's at the very end of the project?

Greg Mummah: Well, I think traditionally we may have been used more as an end of the project thought and honestly I think that's a shame sometimes because we have all of the technology to make it possible to build, deploy and maintain a LegaSuite application in a highly automated fashion. We encourage all of our customers you know when you purchase our solution to make it a part of project planning from the beginning and you know the majority do I guess but in the past we encountered situations where people really thought of this as an afterthought and frankly that may have been because we made it seem too easy, it was, you can take a screen and lay a GUI on top of it or lay a transaction on top of it, and because it was easy, people often thought I can do this at the end of my project and really treat it as an afterthought. We've tried to sort of bring our market place forward and point out whenever we go into a new sale situation that you need to think about the complete life cycle for this application. Not only can you build something with our solutions and of course deploy it using our run time engines but over time as you change those applications that support the LegaSuite deployment, because you have to remember we are re-using the existing application, as you change those applications, you need a good way to move that functionality forward into the new GUI or into the service that we created. And we have some highly automated change

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management tools inside the work bench, our legacy work bench that allow you to do that.

Mark Schroeder: That really is good because change management that's a big problem or a big concern in most shops. If you have all these screens you want to make sure that you get everything and not miss one little piece.

Greg Mummah: Definitely

Mark Schroeder: How about internationalization, can you use other languages and so forth within Rocket?

Greg Mummah: Absolutely, in fact I think that's one of the Great things about rocket, is, we have development facilities all over the world. So we really practice what we preach when it comes to our internationalization, we have facilities in the Netherlands, in the U.S, in Russia, in Australia, in China. So there's a variety of different languages that we have to speak and master just to do business internally in the company. That philosophy is really reflected out in the product line. The GUI solution, the old GUI/400 and J-walk and LegaSuite GUI stuff, have been internationalized since forever that includes coverage for double bite languages like Chinese, we can support those things out of the box. And, I think particularly our software vendor team, the ISVs that buy our solution, a lot of them want to do business in these other work in these other locals where the other languages are spoken and its nice with legaSuite to have the option to basically flip a switch and support a particular CCS Id or a double bite language if the need is there for the business to do that.

Mark Schroeder: Rocket has several applications for modernization, is that correct?

Greg Mummah: Yes, I suppose you could say that. It sort of depends on how much you are looking to do. Rocket acquired U2 sometime ago and U2 application as you may know is the database platform and applications built on the U2 database that business unit of Rocket has moved forward prior to their ever being acquired with their own web enabled solutions for U2 applications specifically. What's interesting about that is within Rocket, now that we are part of this same family, we are encouraged to talk. We and the U2 folks are actually engaging in meetings to figure out what the best synergy there are between their technology and ours and do we have things they can use and do they have things we can use? So I think Rocket is very much set up to does that. Beyond U2 there are some other capabilities that Rocket provides that could be called modernization, some database, translation tools, some ETL type tool and of course a lot of the work and the DB2 tool work that we do for IBM. But I think if you talk about application modernization, probably the LegaSuite component and the U2 component are the two biggest things that we provide.

Mark Schroeder: The LegaSuite, I've used that in the past and it's really quite a nice product.

Greg Mummah: Well, Thank you

Mark Schroeder: We currently actually use it in one of our applications and it's done a great job in modernizing our stuff.

Greg Mummah: Great I will be thrilled to show you LegaSuite 6, that includes all the integration as well as the GUI stuff in Eclipse. We're rolling that out this fall, and very excited actually, it's the first major re-write if you will of the GUI presentation layer in several years and I think it really brings a lot of cool stuff to the table that people have been asking for in a product.

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Mark Schroeder: That sounds good. Are you going to have a video demonstration of it available?

Greg Mummah: We sure will, we going to make quite a bit of noise I hope.

Mark Schroeder: When that comes out, I'd love to put that on softwaremodernization.com so people can have a look at it from here and maybe get to look at your software that way.

Greg Mummah: Oh we will be happy to do that, I've been demo practicing already actually for doing exactly that, So, I think you can probably expect to see something on that sooner or rather than later, we would like to get that message out to the market place, you know even prior to roll out the product, so we'll certainly keep you in the loop on that.

Mark Schroeder: Now we have a programmer, he's listened to the things you had to talk about and he's all ready to get started with Rocket and learn LegaSuite. What's the best way for him to go learn about what the capabilities are that we haven't talked about and then actually learn to start using the product?

Greg Mummah: I think the best way is to engage with us, we can certainly point you to the website. And I think, as with everyone's website, you will get a general picture of what we do and how our products work. But what's always missing from that is an understanding of how our products made up with your environment, as a new programmer you have specific things you like, specific languages and platforms that you use and you know by reading material on our website you may get a general idea of what we do but you probably won't reach the understanding of exactly how you would apply our solution to the exact technical or business problem that you trying to solve. So for example, we don't provide free software downloads because we really don't feel like

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someone would be able to just download our products and turn it loose and become productive and create exactly what they want to create to solve the problem that they have. We don't make anybody download anything or sign anything, there's no obligation at all to talk to us or even have us look over your application and review what it is you trying to do. We are also happy to demonstrate the technology against your specific application and show you exactly what we do and how we do it. And you know we just find that to be very effective, its more effective we think than having somebody download a trial version you know because it doesn't do something three level deep down into the product for someone to get frustrated and walk away simply because they don't understand how it is they need to do what it is they trying to do.

Mark Schroeder: Yes, just using a demo by itself, it can be rather cumbersome and you sometimes do miss a lot out of the product.

Greg Mummah: That's really our philosophy. We could make it available for download but I think people would get more frustrated than necessary if they like had a good experience out of that.

Mark Schroeder: What other services do you offer for your customers? You have a product you sell but do you help mentor people and train people and so forth?

Greg Mummah: Oh we do. We have a fairly significant professional services organization that's global. We have a presence on five continents from our services. We provide everything from product training which can be achieved in under ten days, that's for development, deployment and a little bit of extra stuff thrown in. All the way through to full turn key development and we do all of those types of project for our customers. I think most people actually fall in the middle, which I will call the training and mentoring approach. The idea here is that we provide you the training and get you productive and to understand all of the basics and then we'll help you for your first project, so, a single

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Seagull resource can be on sight or work with you remotely to deliver maybe the first deliverable or the first couple of deliverables from the project. What that really does is it goes one step beyond just classroom training. It helps customers to understand how everything we do work in their environment. I have to say something about our services people too because I'm really proud of our services organization. I actually came up to that organization and started there, and we don't have a single consultant or service partner whose been with us or worked with our products for less than ten years. And I think that's a tremendous testament to our products and also a tremendous comfort I will hope for anyone looking to buy solution like this. When somebody comes on site and works with you, they are not somebody that learnt how to use the product yesterday. They are almost always going to be somebody that's been through hundreds or literally dozens of projects before. So the experience level that we bring to the table is very important. The other thing to say about that is simply that these people have a lot of experience outside just the legacy products. So we've seen a lot of activities recently where our customers want to deploy back office functionality for the web, you know utilities doing that, customer care and letting people turn services on and off through the website instead of calling the contact center for example. Not only can we provide the expertise to hook up that back end system to the website whether it's the main frame or an AS/400 or a UNIX system, but we can provide the expertise to build the website itself. So we just completed phase two on a project actually with a large utility where we've done exactly that, we have helped them SOA enable the mainframe and then we've helped them create a website that their customers actually come to make their service changes.

Mark Schroeder: I think that's actually a pretty good service because when people come from a mainframe or a UNIX that's been used as a legacy system or the 400, they don't have that exposure to the web, so you know moving to the web is a whole new animal for them. So having that capability brought right into with the modernization project sounds really good

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Greg Mummah: Yes, I mean we leave and they are smarter not just about our technology, but they are smarter about the web, they are smarter about doing what it is they really set out to do in the first place and I feel really good about that, I think it's a great thing to offer to our customers.

Mark Schroeder: It sounds like you have a good range of services and your products really fit a good niche. Do you have anything else you want to point out here before we close the interview for the day?

Greg Mummah: I think you know that we are pretty set. I do want to just invite anyone who maybe reading or listening to come to the website and keep your eyes open for announcement about LegaSuite 6, we are going to be rolling out that this fall, we really excited about exposing the market to some of the coolest thing that I think we've ever done as a product in a development organization. I just want to thank you for your time and for doing this interview and certainly would like to thank everyone who's listening or reading along, I appreciate your attention and your interest.

Mark Schroeder: Thank you for your time.