



Future-proof your SWIFT infrastructure

DBS discovers how to benefit from off-the-shelf functionality without sacrificing its unique operational workflow

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Chin Lok Ang, Vice President, GTS Cash & Channels Technology, DBS Bank

Benefits

- Customisation in line with business needs
- Maximum automation of system management tasks
- Improved database recovery
- Message flow aggregation

In 2008, DBS, one of the leading financial services groups in Asia with over 200 branches across 15 markets, began to explore the possibility of replacing its SWIFT infrastructure. “We needed to make a decision about the future of our infrastructure and were keen to benefit from new functionality that SWIFT was introducing,” says Chin Lok Ang, Vice President, GTS Cash & Channels Technology DBS. As part of the SWIFTNet 7.0 release, this included in particular the improved database recovery features and the aggregation of all messaging flows, including FileAct over one channel. The decision was also informed by the need to improve performance compared to the existing system and the consequent need to ensure a robust business continuity strategy.

Several considerations led the bank to explore SWIFT’s product offerings. “We wanted a system that had many users and a well developed customer support framework,” says Chin Lok. “Our thinking was, why not use a SWIFT product to connect to a SWIFT service?”

“SWIFT is industry leader in the interface market, with Alliance having a spotless track record of over 15 years in direct connectivity. This provides significant comfort to leading banks such as DBS who exercise the strictest control over their operations,” adds Anand Bindumadhavan, director, products, Asia Pacific, SWIFT.

The bank opted for Alliance Access, a multi-platform interface targeted at medium-to-top-volume customers, allowing several destinations to connect to SWIFT with maximum automation of system management tasks. DBS coupled this with Alliance Integrator, an add-on that helps to connect a customer’s business applications to SWIFT with minimum effort. The particular configuration was chosen to accommodate the DBS in-house architecture. “A few specific internal systems were not supported out-of-the-box by Alliance Access and Integrator was used to bridge the gap,” Bindumadhavan explains.



Once the decision had been taken, SWIFT and local partner NCSI provided comprehensive assistance with both implementation and migration. “The local partner was our primary day-to-day contact on implementation and we looked to SWIFT as more of a consultant,” says Chin Lok. “In practice, however, the entire implementation has been more of a three-way partnership.”

The implementation project was structured in three phases, Chin Lok explains. Phase One – the simplest and quickest part of the project – involved the adoption of Alliance Access as a tool to connect to SWIFT, replacing the existing interface. Phase two saw the extension of the user base and functionality within the bank, while phase three focused on interfacing to the back office.

Phase one, which essentially involved the deployment of ‘out-of-the-box’ functionality, was as smooth as expected, says Chin Lok. Additional configuration was discussed and customised in subsequent phases. In fact, says Boon Khee Lim, senior vice president and head, GTS cash & channels technology, DBS, “Flexibility in deployment and the possibility of customisation were key factors in our choice.”

“While NCSI was the prime owner of the project, SWIFT was closely involved in the process,” says Chin Lok, “and was very responsive to our requests for workarounds while designing appropriate longer-term customised solutions for our specific needs.”

As the final phase of the project draws to a successful close, Boon Khee at DBS has a word of advice for peers looking to consider migrating to Alliance: “Divide the migration strategy into multiple smaller phases – divide and conquer! This will mitigate the risk and control the exposure.”

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