

TmaxSoft enables
Digital Transformation
at Finnish government
agency with OpenFrame



Kela is the Finnish government agency responsible for the distribution of social security benefits, including pensions, sickness and housing benefits, and health insurance. Kela manages around 40 different benefits payments and distributes approximately €14 billion to Finnish citizens annually.





CUSTOMER NAME

Kela

INDUSTRY

Government social security

CHALLENGES

- Needed to reduce cost of maintaining outdated mainframe technology
- Lacked skills to perform maintenance and development
- Required flexibility to develop new applications to offer better customer service

TMAXSOFT SOLUTION

OpenFrame and associated components

RESULTS

- A smooth re-hosting service onto a more flexible platform with no requirement to redevelop or modify applications
- Annual run costs reduced by 75%
- Facility for development of new applications and programs
- Improved customer experience

The challenge

Kela's mainframe, which comprises the core of its IT infrastructure, is one of the oldest and largest in the Nordic region and has been in use for decades. But while its mainframe has served the organization well over the years, Kela started to recognize that it could not support its long-term ambitions for two main reasons. The first related to maintenance burden of the mainframe itself, which was becoming increasingly difficult and costly to keep running. The second related to Kela's digital ambitions, which were being hamstrung by its mainframe.

Markku Suominen, ICT Director at Kela, discusses the challenges of using this technology: "Mainframes are very big and expensive to run, costing us about €8 million per year and we recognized that those costs would only increase. There is now a severe shortage of personnel in Finland that are trained to maintain mainframes, because the technology is now so outdated that

students no longer learn how to work with them. At the same time, we are trying develop our online and digital offering to be able to provide best-in-class services to the Finnish public, but found that we were unable to do so due to the inflexible nature of our infrastructure."

However, while the organization could have rewritten the apps on its mainframe and develop a completely new environment, this was not a viable option. Markku explains: "The programs and databases on our mainframes use over 10 million lines of PL/1 code. We do not have the resources to edit this quantity of programming, and we also knew that asking our talented coders to rewrite millions of lines of code would be very demotivating for them. We needed a new environment that would enable us to leverage the skills of our staff and maintain our existing applications, which is why we decided to simply re-host the mainframe with TmaxSoft."



The solution

Working with local integrator CGI, Kela opted to migrate its existing programs and databases from the mainframe to a new, multi-tiered x86 environment using TmaxSoft's OpenFrame. Markku explained: "We wanted to find a software solution that could provide the same high availability and continuous usage that we had on the mainframe. When TmaxSoft and OpenFrame were introduced to us we found out that they were exceptionally similar, and met our architectural needs."

OpenFrame enables its users to transfer programs from mainframes to Linux/UNIX hardware without making any adjustments to the underlying code. This was a key selling point for Kela as it was crucial that its CICS (Customer Information Control System) programs, which process high-volumes of online transactions, moved smoothly into the new environment so that Finnish citizens could continue to access Kela's web services and their benefits. Critically, OpenFrame also provides web servers, web application servers, mainframe-level security features, as well as facilitating data migration.

Markku added: "When you're moving from a mainframe to a re-hosted environment with Tmax OpenFrame, you're gaining actually something that we haven't seen in other solutions. You're gaining the ability to continue with the same terminology, so just when you lift, and you shift, they do the same for your staff. You don't have to teach the new terms; they can actually continue as they always have done. Moreover, we are able to maintain the code, we still own the code, even though there are small changes, so we still have the feel of ownership.

"When you're doing a re-hosting, the key thing to remember is that you should only lift and shift,"

he continued. "By that I mean you shouldn't do any developing during it. You have to know what you're moving, and where are you moving it. If you add some new features or new capabilities, things won't work as they should do."

OpenFrame not only provides greater flexibility for Kela to add new online services, it ensures optimum performance from existing programs by removing code that has never been executed and operating on faster, newer hardware. OpenFrame also incorporates a test tool, so that Kela can be reassured that its software and applications will be fully operational without its staff having to learn how to setup and use a third-party test tool.

Looking ahead to the completion of the project, Markku says: "When we have completed the re-hosting in 2019 we will be switch off the mainframe and operate solely from the re-hosted environment. This will take our costs down considerably, from around €8 million a year today to €2 million. That enables us to take some of that money that we save, to make it into the change budget, to actually increase the speed of the change.

"We pride ourselves on providing the very best customer service," Markku concluded. "It was very important for us to re-host our existing programs with OpenFrame, not just because we wanted to save money on maintaining the mainframe, but because it gives us the flexibility to provide the latest online services to our users. We know that our users are becoming more digitally-focused and OpenFrame gives us the opportunity to be there with them, ready for the next phase of digital transformation."

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ICT Director, Kela

TmaxSoft is a global software innovator focused on data management, middleware and mainframe modernization, with solutions that offer enterprise CIOs viable alternatives to support their global IT powerhouses and drive competitive advantage. TmaxSoft has based its growth on a strong foundation of research and development, along with a sustained commitment to innovation. Today, we are working with over 2,000 customers around the world.

Tibero is the best enterprise RDBMS for the Virtual Data Center. Our licensing model allows enterprises to fully maximize their virtualization investment by only licensing the cores associated to a given VM, resulting in drastically lower TCO.

OpenFrame is a legacy rehosting solution that enables mainframe applications, resources and data to be migrated to a less expensive, high performance open system while reducing TCO, and minimizing risk of migration, all in very short timeframes.

JEUS is the first Web Application Server in the world to be J2EE 1.4, JAVA EE 5 and JAVA EE 6 Certified, and can deliver improved security over traditional WAS.



TmaxSoft was founded in 1997 and today, we have over 1,000 employees in 20 strategic Centers around the world.



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