

Extending underwriting availability while controlling cost and operational risk



Property & Casualty Insurance



Overview

This regional property and casualty insurance provider supports customer quoting and underwriting through a homegrown mainframe application running on IBM z/OS with CICS and VSAM. The application is highly visible to the business, supporting customer-facing operations and underwriting staff across multiple time zones.





Availability and responsiveness are critical, particularly during peak quoting and underwriting periods.

Business need

The insurer needed to extend availability for underwriting and quoting systems without increasing mainframe costs or disrupting online users.

Previously, batch processing required VSAM files to be closed or flipped into inquiry-only mode. This approach restricted processing to limited batch windows and negatively impacted users, particularly those operating later in the business day.

Key challenges included:

-  File outages that affected underwriting and quoting access
-  Growing demand for extended business-hour availability
-  Performance concerns when batch jobs were introduced during the day
-  Cost sensitivity related to mainframe capacity and licensing

Rewriting applications or migrating to alternative platforms was not a practical option.

Solution

The insurer implemented SYSB-II to allow batch underwriting and quoting jobs to run while CICS remained online and actively accessing the same VSAM files.

SYSB-II was deployed using a JCL-based implementation, enabling file sharing without application code changes. The solution included:

- ✓ Concurrent batch and online VSAM access
- ✓ Transaction integrity through syncpointing
- ✓ Integrated backward recovery for operational safety
- ✓ Performance tuning aligned with workload characteristics

This approach allowed the organization to modernize processing behavior while preserving stable, proven applications.

Benefits

- ✓ **Extended underwriting availability** — Files remain accessible to users while batch updates run.
- ✓ **Improved customer experience** — Underwriters and agents access current data without delays or outages.
- ✓ **Controlled performance** — Configuration and tuning recommendations brought batch runtimes close to original execution times.
- ✓ **Cost alignment** — The organization avoided additional capacity growth while expanding availability.
- ✓ **Low implementation risk** — No application rewrites or data conversions were required.

Eliminating File Outages During Underwriting and Quoting

Before SYSB-II, files supporting underwriting and quoting were periodically restricted to allow batch processing. This limited operational flexibility and disrupted users, especially those in later time zones.

With SYSB-II in place, batch jobs safely update VSAM files while CICS transactions continue uninterrupted. This eliminated the need to restrict file access and allowed processing to align more closely with business demand.

Addressing Performance and Recovery Concerns

Performance was a concern early in deployment when batch jobs were introduced during extended hours. With targeted CICS, z/OS, and VSAM configuration adjustments, runtimes were reduced to near their original levels.

SYSB-II's backward recovery capabilities provided additional confidence, allowing certain jobs to be enhanced with restartability where integrity concerns existed. This reduced operational risk and simplified error handling.



Conclusion

By implementing SYSB-II, this insurer extended underwriting and quoting availability, improved operational flexibility, and maintained tight control over performance and cost.

SYSB-II now operates as a dependable part of the production environment, enabling business growth and improved service levels without requiring architectural change or increased mainframe investment.

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