



French government leads Europe with a meta-directory

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Project Director for the programme at ADAE

BT integrates public services information into an electronic directory of over 600,000 French civil servants, available over the internet and updated in real time

Executive Summary

In 2000, the French Government Agency for the Development of E-Government (ADAE) set up a meta-directory of contact information for all public service civil servants. In 2004 BT was awarded the contract for development and implementation of the next phase of the programme, which included the provision and management of associated hosting infrastructure and services.

BT integrated open source and custom-made components, as well as some specific application developments. The objective was to design a platform architecture that was open and would ensure real time availability of information and the fastest possible search speeds. A public key infrastructure (PKI) was used to increase access security levels to the system.

It is now possible to update information residing on the government intranet, using the internet, in real time. Using a dashboard, the Agency can easily monitor response times and availability levels. The platform currently contains contact information for over 600,000 civil servants, delivers more than 99.8 per cent availability and processes requests twice as fast as before.

Case study

French Government

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Marketplace

The Agency for the Development of E-Government's (ADAE) mission is to support the development of government IT systems with the view of modernising public administration thus enabling it to better respond to citizen requirements and expectations.

In 1999, the E-Government programme Administration en Réseau (a networked administration) was launched in France. One of its projects was the creation of a meta-directory for the entire public service. The meta-directory would make all information on officials and public services available in one place. Known as méta-annuaire inter-administration (MAIA) it was to become the principal point of reference for all French public administrations.

Business opportunity

Launched in 2000, MAIA started out as simply an e-mail directory, but it did gather together the contact details of 600,000 officials at all government ministries, as well as some public administrations. Previously, each ministry had been producing its own directory that could be accessed only via the intranet of that particular ministry. Information from one ministry's directory could not be shared with that of another ministry.

In 2004 MAIA took on a new dimension (and became MAIA 2) with the creation of a new E-Government programme. This programme included 140 new measures intended to make public administration faster, better managed, and more efficient. It also needed to satisfy key requirements: listening to the needs of users, be they citizens or the administrations themselves; making government services accessible to all; and creating a relationship of trust offering better control of state expenditure.

MAIA 2 was a direct result of this programme. The meta-directory was to make use of state-of-the-art technology and to adopt an open architecture, which would make updating and searching faster. In 2003, the ADAE launched a tender for the upgrade of MAIA with these objectives in mind.

The tender required that the Metadirectory be made available to French regional administrations via the internet. It would need a high level of security based on PKI (public key infrastructure). The tender also stipulated a hosting solution and a guarantee that the system would maintain a rate of availability of 99.8 per cent. The successful supplier would be required to be in direct contact with the relevant public administration so that it could handle follow-up tasks without involving the Agency.

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BT solution

According to Mr. Bruno Houdent, Project Director for the programme at ADAE, the BT proposal was superior in almost every respect. The solution included design and integration services, 3rd party products, hosting services, as well as training and project management. From a technical point of view, the BT solution offered the highest levels of security. The technology components were state-of-the-art (Novell® eDirectory™, Meibo from ILEX) and ensured reliability and high performance. Moreover, BT was able to offer an end-to-end solution by being able to provide both the system integration services and the hosting capabilities.

Mr. Houdent adds that BT offered the best financial terms for the project, especially because of their use of open source components alongside those developed specifically for the project. The hosting proposal more than met their requirements, particularly with regard to response times and availability levels.

For MAIA 2, BT deployed its extensive know-how and experience in areas such as directory build, federated identity management and security as well as convergence, infrastructure and hosting projects. BT integrated third party products like Novell eDirectory as well as the ILEX Meibo interface for content management. The system creates an interactive organigramme for public services, as well as a more traditional interface via a white/yellow pages system. In this way, about 40,000 state services are now listed on MAIA 2.

BT deployed the new system without users incurring any service interruptions. Ministry officials received training on the new platform and BT also provided a customer service desk during the deployment phase to track and handle any incidents.

Results

Mr. Houdent points to BT's technical skills and to the high quality of its integration and hosting services. The BT team showed great commitment in resolving any issues that arose and displayed expertise in managing this complex IT project which included several industry partners.

Today MAIA 2 processes over 300,000 requests each month. In total, two million users can potentially access the system and it can handle 400 simultaneous connections. According to M. Houdent, the service is widely used and accepted. Directory searching is now twice as fast as it was before and unlike its predecessor, MAIA 2 supports the internet. Database managers at territorial administrations can therefore use this facility to make real-time updates.

The system also provides dashboards with quarterly performance indicators. These tracking tools not only enable ADAE to ensure BT is meeting its service level commitments, but also allow it to report statistics back to its partners on a regular basis. Mr. Houdent is sure about the reliability of the platform. Since its launch, there have been no service interruptions and the availability commitment of 99.8 per cent has been underwritten.

With MAIA 2, France serves as an example to its European partners: no other EU country has such a metadirectory in operation.

Why BT?

- BT has a proven track record as a provider of identity management services, as well as of systems integration and hosting services
- BT has extensive technological expertise and chose the best products on the market to build MAIA 2
- BT offers added value hosting services, meeting the demands for quality of service and availability of the Agency
- BT is experienced in dealing with public administrations and the government sector in general

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Technology blueprint

BT applied the schema for interoperable directories for administration. This standard conforms to the Requests for Comment (RFC) for the Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) standard as well as to standards developed by the ADAE's cadre commun d'interopérabilité (CCI). BT also integrated Novell eDirectory with the Meibo interface for content management developed by the French company ILEX.

The system uses a Linux platform, with software specially designed by BT. It employs Public Key Infrastructure and federated identity management to ensure security. BT hosts the storage system at its Paris Data Centre with a web server system, application servers, LDAP servers and specialised services for improved and more rapid searching.

Main BT products & services

- Consultancy services for Identity Management
- Platform design and project management services
- Integration services
- Hosting services

Offices worldwide

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