

## Ground Floor for a New Core

*CUs who know the chief developer's skill have already signed on to convert to Corelation's brand-new KeyStone core processing system.*

By Lisa Hochgraf

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Cabrillo Credit Union, San Diego, was Symitar's first client 25 years ago, according to CEO Robin Lentz, a CUES member. In mid-2011, \$171 million Cabrillo CU will become the second institution to convert to a new core processing system developed by Galaxy and Symitar co-founder John Landis. The first to convert will be \$88 million Harbor Federal Credit Union, Torrance, Calif.

"When I learned that a couple of the original (Galaxy and Symitar) people were starting a new company, I was really excited to find out what they were doing," Lentz states. "I sought them out. Following a demo of the KeyStone system, my IT group was excited, too."

What she found was [Corelation](#), a new company founded by Landis, and its core processing product, KeyStone.

Lentz says she was drawn to KeyStone's member-centric focus. "When a credit union staff person brings up a name, he can see all the account relationships the CU has with that member," rather than starting by bringing information up account by account, Lentz notes. Also, "the back-end processing is very fast. It's designed in a different way."

According to Corelation President Theresa Benavidez, KeyStone is browser based, written in C++ with a SQL (structured query language) database, and is run on the IBM Power machines, which are the fastest transaction processing platforms in the industry.

“We don’t use any proprietary languages,” Benavidez says. “We wanted to use technology that was available in the market.

“We take advantage of every benefit IBM brings to the table. For example, if the system goes down, it will bring itself back up without intervention from the credit union by relying on some of the inherent features of IBM’s DB2. Also, we process transactions across several CPUs (central processing units), taking full advantage of IBM’s multi-threading capabilities so processing large job runs happens much quicker.”

CUES member Mark Davis followed a path similar to Lentz’s in signing on to convert to KeyStone. CEO of \$23 million Oregon Pioneer Federal Credit Union, Milwaukie, Ore., Davis knew Landis’ [background](#) from working with him in the past. He was interested to find out that Landis was again writing code.

“We viewed a couple of Webinars,” he says. “Then my board viewed another Webinar. We all liked the feature of having electronic document storage. We’ll be using the e-signature pads, and all those signatures on receipts will be stored on the system and hopefully reduce the need for paper.”

According to Benavidez, every transaction on the system produces a document that’s stored in PDF format in connection with that transaction. “Credit unions don’t have to go out to an imaging system to review those documents, as they can be viewed from the core,” she says. “Staff can view, e-mail and reprint them for the members.

“Credit unions can and should send the PDFs to an imaging system for more permanent storage,” Benavidez notes. “But for some smaller credit unions who don’t have an imaging system, this feature gives them the ability to store documents electronically.”

So what do Lentz and Davis say when someone (like this reporter) asks them about the risks of buying into the first “model year” of the new system? Both underscore their belief in the talents of the developers.

“We’ve seen a good portion of the software,” Lentz says. “When we went with Symitar 25 years ago, basically we were buying John, Manny [Prupes] and Dave [Held]. I know John and he created an amazing system that is still in place today; I think it’s a great testament to his talent.”

With plans to convert to KeyStone by June 1, 2011, Davis tells a fun story to demonstrate why he has faith in this new product. When Davis’ CU converted to Symitar on April Fool’s Day 1985, the CU had a bomb threat and the system crashed “Aand John Landis wrote code through the night and we were up the next day,” Davis says. “The trust factor is already there for people who have been with Galaxy or Symitar.”

Benavidez says Landis and his team faced the same kinds of questions in 1979 when Galaxy was launched and in 1984 when Symitar was launched. “Yes, we’re new and the software is untested,” she concedes. “But we’re in a very envious spot in that there are people in this industry who are the best at what they do and they want to come to work for us. When we post a position, we get some of the most talented people in the industry applying for the job.”

Right now, the development team is creating the interfaces, working on certifying things like credit retrieval, and finalizing the workflow for the lending and new member modules, Benavidez says. “The interfaces are a big piece of what is left to be done.” The plan is that when Harbor FCU and Cabrillo CU convert in early- to mid-2011, every module will be complete, tested and running live in a credit union.

Lentz says that being on the ground floor gives her team the wonderful advantage of being able to offer lots of input to the developers.

Additionally, other CU industry vendors have been very supportive of Corelation. Many have asked for our API specs so they can start writing code that will link their systems to the new core. “They want to be ready,” Benavidez says.

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