SWIFT: zero risk for worldwide banking transactions

There is no trifling with security at SWIFT. The cards and readers which enable us to authenticate 8,900 SWIFT clients in 209 countries are proof of a solid partnership with Steria which is based on finely-tuned expertise within the banking sector and of financial transactions, as well as the concepts of the one-stop-shop and SPoC (Single Point of Contact). These are all assets which SWIFT uses within an internal, single sign-on project.

The "USE" (User Security Enhancement) project dates back to 1987. "We wanted to improve security which was at that time based on codes printed on paper and replace the exchange of registered letters which was used by banks to exchange the keys used to authenticate financial traffic. A key public infrastructure was defined, based on the RSA algorithm, and a chip card – secure reader pair chosen", says Jean-Jacques Joseph, a member of the Security Risk Management team at SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication). Once the network access function and financial application had been introduced between 1992 and 1995 in 80 SWIFT member countries, the bilateral key exchange service was set up and maintained until 1997.

Re-engineering: a serious integrator

Because of the gradual increase, from 3,700 to 8,900 clients who were now spread over 209 countries, the need arose for a new environment. In 2002, the contract was won by Steria following the disposal of some parts of Bull's business. Since the transition was completed in total transparency, contacts have been maintained. "As it was all happening in 2003, Steria and our security risk management team, in charge of applications, network security, and intrusion tests, led detailed discussions on a real re-engineering solution. This proved to be necessary given the lightening speed at which security technologies were advancing. It was a matter of extending the keys, without impacting on our users' systems, to avoid upsetting their business. We took advantage of this to 're-design' the reader's prototype card, so that it would be compatible with European regulations."

As the contractor, Steria positioned itself as the SPoC in charge of making sure that the various external partners would stick to their commitment, communicating with SWIFT engineers to reach the necessary conclusions rapidly and assessing costs and lead times. "It was not a client-supplier relationship. Since we were in charge of specifications, we were part of the integrator, which was not content with merely supplying the equipment. It was managing the whole project – including development, integration, implementation, testing, support and worldwide maintenance of readers from Belgium. This had to be done in the shortest possible time, with all the logistical skill which this required

Delivery was completed by the end of 2004, without a presentation road show being necessary as it had been in the 1990s: "Steria thought up the solution to make it as transparent as possible. The continuity since 1987 facilitated the task, as we shared a tried and tested methodology and formatted documentation", adds Jean-Jacques Joseph.

Single sign-on

With confidence to its advantage, Steria won the call for tender for the securitisation of

Jean-Jacques Joseph, member of the Security Risk Management team at SWIFT: "Steria listens to us and is capable of adapting its working habits to what is required. It is an integrator… that knows how to integrate!"

control units within the SWIFT operational centres all over the world which was implemented in 2009. Its aim was to control physical access to the units and enable traceability of orders issued by the operator. "What made a difference was its practical expertise which goes beyond theory. When Steria proposed a product, it explained what it was capable of and why it would suit us. The company was always available which enabled us to define and refine the ideal solution which developed according to our needs. This encouraged us in the choice of product… and in the choice of integrator", Jean-Jacques Joseph concludes.