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Software AG Government Solutions Systems Engineer Eric Wood discusses the value APIs bring to modernizing legacy systems and applications for unlocking data's potential in federal agencies.

**What challenges do agencies face regarding legacy systems today?**

These agencies have challenges with their legacy systems because, one of the
things is their data’s in silos. When they built these legacy systems some 30 to 35 years ago, they built these applications with the data in mind just for those enterprises. As time moved on, they needed to do more things with these applications, but they felt like their data was locked in jail, in silos. Then they’re facing this reality that the skill sets and the developers that actually created these applications are starting to retire. And with them retiring, there goes the skills and the documentation. They will tell you it’s in the heads of all the developers, and sometimes it's very hard to understand these applications.

**What are some of the approaches to resolve mainframe integration challenges?**

Software AG has a platform that we call the WebMethods Mainframe Integration Platform. Being the developer of the world’s most capable integration platform, we have an approach that will allow you to integrate, as well as modernize, your legacy applications in several approaches. One of the approaches is on the logic of the program level. That's where the actual functionality of the system resides. Then of course there's the data level. As I mentioned earlier, data has been locked in silos and there's no integration of the data themselves. Another approach is on the screen or user interface level, where we allow you to API enable the actual user interface.

**Why should agencies consider API enabling their legacy code?**

The application and their data resides in those business logic. They’ll spend many years and invested time building these applications in this business logic to custom fit these agencies. So why try to rip and replace, which they have done, and failed, and failed miserably? They have spent millions of dollars and millions of manpower hours trying to reproduce a system that is working properly, and they ended up going back to their mainframe applications because of how they work in a security within those applications.

**How can agencies unlock legacy data from siloed**
The data has been locked for many years and these silos can be of many different varieties. Our approach with WebMethods Integration — we have several connectors that will allow you to connect to those backend data. With that data, you can visualize that data, you can virtualize that data, as well as move that data from one platform to another to do synchronization. And what do I mean by visualize it? I could take the data from various data sources and bring it into one environment and I can run it through any type of BI tool, as well as dashboards to start analyzing data and looking at the data in a little different light than I currently do.

Why should agencies modernize and API-enable their online green screen applications?

Green screens — Everyone wants to get away from them. So an example of using the screen level is that it allows you to make the screen look more pleasing to the eye and more modern to the user. Believe it or not, a lot of people never seen green screen; it's becoming extinct. So using the user interface in changing that is given more of a look and feel that their customers are seeing — things like radio buttons, push buttons and pull-down apps. This is what they’re accustomed to now, not knowing that the backend applications is a legacy system that has been written 30-plus years.