

The case for replacing IBM ASF with DOPIX

Introduction

IBM's ASF software enables the production and distribution of customer correspondence and general documentation at scale across the enterprises running it on their mainframe systems. Contact Centres, Marketing, Operations and Customer Service departments may rely entirely on ASF, or use it with other systems. The IBM software named Application Support Facility (or commonly "ASF") was first introduced about 30 years ago and has been a legacy product for many years. In 2015 IBM announced the withdrawal of marketing of ASF and the termination of support on 30 / 09/ 2017. It is now officially unsupported.

With the withdrawal of ASF support, IBM has introduced a gap and discontinuity into their customer communication management capabilities. The immediate effect of this is the risk of the unsupported software failing in a live commercial environment. Other risks, including sub-standard productivity and customer losses are summarised below and expanded upon in our downloadable [ASF Risk Register](#).

Options

Although ASF is a relatively stable product there are many risks that should be considered when running obsolete software (alongside the financial inefficiencies of software initially created 30 years ago). Customers now have three choices:

(a) Accept the risk and delay any replacement. In the current fast changing workplace (particularly for organisations undertaking M&A, re-structuring, re-architecting IT, re-branding, or combinations of these) with multiple impacts from customers, legislation and regulators, doing nothing with ASF installations might be deemed simple, but it is far from the safe option.

Consequences include:

- Catastrophic failure – following incompatible upgrades, hacking, or administrator mistakes. New solutions may take over a year to implement and test (often many years).
- Incorrect data being communicated to customers, particularly personal data after feeder system changes
- Loss of key staff and expertise, reducing capability to recover and support business change
- Block a switch to paperless or self-service communications meaning higher costs and customer frustration
- Reduced capacity to implement business changes (required by Regulator, Brexit, Re-Branding, Marketing).

(b) Attempt to move to a different platform (typically attempting to change both software and hardware simultaneously). Many unproven approaches have been attempted, only to fail. Typically, these are undertaken without guarantee of success and the client paying regardless of outcomes. However, there can be significant and "unknown" issues that arise. In our [ASF Risk Register](#) paper, we list the experiences of other ASF clients in helpful categorisations.

Clients should assess the risks and benefits of any unproven approach very carefully and insist on references and guarantees in their contractual negotiations.

(c) A straightforward migration to a compatible, current and capable software alternative. Icon's DOPIX is IBM's only recommended successor to ASF and is the only binary compatible software available on the market today. This compatibility means that DOPIX utilises the existing business logic, including the complex and valuable IP that has been built up over many years.

ASF can be switched off in months when replaced by DOPIX, with almost no testing required (versus extensive testing needed for other approaches). It also frees a key dependence on costly mainframes.

Risk Summary

The [downloadable paper](#) provides more detail, including a costed and weighted risk matrix starter template. The experiences of Europe's ASF users are shown in terms of typical weighted exposure (and probability) and a risk-adjusted perspective totalling:

- Total Exposure: £ 81.9M - £ 185.8M
- Weighted Risk: **£ 16.1M - £ 35.7M**

Return on Investment

Mitigating any risk must always be balanced against the cost of prevention. However, the cost of implementing DOPIX is more than outweighed by the huge potential returns derived from using state of the art software. Examples include increased productivity for IT and Business, customer self-service, enhanced customer relationships, and architectural simplicity and flexibility.

The following numbers are abstracted from a detailed ROI calculator spreadsheet (*available on request*) which provide typical detailed five-year costings:

IT efficiencies (after DOPIX costs):	£ 4.8M
Paper and Postal Costs Savings:	£ 9.7M
Line of business staff efficiency:	<u>£ 15.0M</u>
TOTAL SAVING	£ 29.5M

There are many reference customers with far higher savings than this model.

Summary

Every organisation currently running IBM's ASF should carefully and urgently assess their options. Icon DOPIX has successfully replaced ASF in more sites worldwide than any other product available.

DOPIX enables a fast and low risk migration to a richer modern platform functionality, whether still on, or independent of, the mainframe.

Uniquely it is a proven solution coupled to an implementation methodology with guarantees of time, cost and quality. With typical weighted risk avoidance and savings benefits of **>£45M**, this should be a priority.

Doing nothing is not the safe, or correct, answer. It is likely that a move to DOPIX, if not taken now, will be urgently reconsidered in the next 3-5 years. This is an opportunity to realise savings, business benefits and reduce operational risk early – before one or more of the major risks above materialises at a cost often far higher than the entire DOPIX project.

Next steps

For further exploration, simply request a Consultation, or a Risk Register template, Risk Management Assessment Calculator spreadsheet, or Icon UK assistance with workshops or a free Health Check.

If further discussion of these issues is helpful, contact icon directly at info@icon-uk.net.