

DataMirror ensures smooth roads ahead for De Lijn

Commentary by Danny De Boeck,
Data Administrator, and Ferre Cools, Systems Engineer, De Lijn

INDUSTRY

TRANSPORTATION

BUSINESS APPLICATION

DATA WAREHOUSING,
HIGH AVAILABILITY



In 1998, De Lijn buses drove 125 million kilometres and gave 216 million rides throughout Belgium. Only established ten years ago, Belgian bus and transport company De Lijn has grown steadily since the merger between the Flemish part of the National Companies of Branch Lines, and the companies responsible for local district transport in Antwerp and Gent. Today, with headquarters in Mechelen, De Lijn serves the Flanders region of Belgium by offering transportation between major cities, and operates several local public transportation systems throughout the nation.

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De Lijn is comprised of five independent offices in Antwerp, East-Flanders, West-Flanders, Brabant, and Limburg. The Company employs over 5,400 employees, and owns approximately 3,000 vehicles.

The Problem

The De Lijn computing environment consists of four iSeries (AS/400) machines storing DB2 data, three of which store information specific to each regional office. The Company uses ASW-FIN, a financial package for bookkeeping from IBS; and a tool for the management of metadata from Norkom.

"There were several reasons that led us to search for data warehousing and high availability solutions," says Danny De Boeck, Data Administrator for De Lijn. "We needed to consolidate all of our different library entities into one central library, where we could turn all of our data into useful information so we could make important corporate decisions. We also decided that a replication tool would not be good enough without an effective backup solution."

One Solution, Two Solutions

In 2000, the De Lijn team selected Transformation Server and High Availability Suite for their data warehousing and disaster recovery needs. The Company uses High Availability Suite to back up all data from the three iSeries machines on one target iSeries. Transformation Server then takes that data from the backup store and moves it in real-time to a data warehousing store on the same machine.

Transformation Server enables users to easily and seamlessly move and share data in real-time among mixed system environments. For organizations like De Lijn with homogeneous computing environments, Transformation Server provides high performance, cost effective data replication and integration between like databases.

"There were several reasons why we chose Transformation Server," says De Boeck. "We liked that it was a replication tool with many features we were looking for: it could offer row and column selection, create new fields, and joining functions. We also liked that Transformation Server was easy to implement and required no programming changes to existing applications and databases."

High Availability Suite can detect primary system failure, whether planned or unplanned in iSeries and AS/400 environments, and invoke operational switching to enable continuous availability to organizations.

"A data warehousing tool would allow our employees to share so much data, so to lose it would be a disaster," says Ferre Cools, Systems Engineer for De Lijn. "While looking for a replication tool, we looked for a supplier that could offer a backup solution in addition to a data warehousing tool. It was therefore a natural choice to go with DataMirror High Availability Suite."

Proximity was another factor in De Lijn's decision-making process.

"Many companies we looked at had to fly someone over from the United States or France," says Cools. "We preferred to get local support. The fact that DataMirror has an office in Antwerp was a major incentive in our decision-making."

Mission Accomplished

Since the implementation of Transformation Server and High Availability Suite, De Lijn has seen many positive results. Today, there are 1,500 employees in marketing, general management, and the financial department subscribed to the data warehouse. Approximately 6 million journal transactions are made each day.

"Transformation Server allows us to conduct list and interrogation programs in the data warehouse store, which diminishes the workload on our production machines," says De Boeck. "As well, having High Availability Suite means that, if we experience downtime, we won't have to worry about losing important business data. Now that our users can confidently access the information they want, when they want it, De Lijn as an organization can truly run 24/7. Plus, we can run fewer backups of data, which diminishes the workload on all the other AS/400s."

Another positive outcome, adds Cools, is Company confidence in the DataMirror technical team.

"They know their products very well, and are always prepared to answer our questions or solve any of our problems,

no matter what kind they may be," he says. "Even the sales staff is very technical, which was especially useful in the beginning processes to implement both products. What we also appreciate very much is the fact that they adapt their products to our wishes. You just make a wish and they'll make it come true.

"We are confident that DataMirror will continue to contribute to the efficiency of our organization, which means our customers continue to receive quality service, while De Lijn retains a prominent standing position in the Belgian transportation industry."



DataMirror software is available on-line at datamirror.com or call 1-800-362-5955

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