

Global Industries streamlines data across the enterprise with flexible DataMirror solution

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INDUSTRY

MANUFACTURING

BUSINESS APPLICATION

DATA DISTRIBUTION
e-BUSINESS



Founded in 1966, Global Industries (www.globalindustries.com) is the fifth largest office furniture manufacturer in North America, and continues to be one of the fastest growing as well. With over 6,000 employees and manufacturing facilities in Canada, England, France, Malaysia, Australia, Israel and Brazil, Global Industries distributes products worldwide through select dealers, retailers and wholesalers. The Company's mission is to provide the best possible value to its customers through its quality chairs, desks and filing cabinets.

Company found it economically unfeasible to connect all distribution centers with the corporate computing environment. As a result, Global Industries installed individual LAN networks at each center – first Novell, later Microsoft Windows NT/2000 – and had them run autonomously as separate entities.

"Because each network was separate, we couldn't share business information across the enterprise," says Adam White, Senior Programmer/Analyst of Global Industries in New Jersey. "There was no easy way for our employees to access data about the status of each purchase order, so our customer service representatives had to constantly deal with numerous phone calls from our own distribution centers. This very problem not only made things difficult for our reps, but also all other employees who needed this data to efficiently do their jobs."

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The Problem

Global Industries in the United States embodies 17 distribution centers located throughout the country. The Company has a model 620 AS/400 (iSeries) at its Marlton, New Jersey headquarters, which runs a heavily modified version of Data Processing Service's Distribution Package (DPS/9000). Ten years ago, the

Keeping track of the purchase order process was equally challenging due to time-consuming data entry. Orders were either entered at the local distribution center through a lower-end distribution accounting package or faxed to corporate headquarters for centralized purchasing. The orders were then re-keyed into the Company's AS/400 (iSeries), and purchase orders were electronically sent to manufacturing facilities in Toronto, Canada.

The Solution

"We were interested in finding a real-time solution that would allow all distribution centers to access the most up-to-date, most accurate information possible, whenever we wanted it," says White. "However, due to security and response time issues, we were wary about overworking our AS/400 in a dual role as both production server and web server."

Global Industries began the search for a real-time advanced data capture, transform and flow (CTF) tool that would distribute the SQL Server-based purchase orders to the AS/400 server as well as from the AS/400 to the SQL Server in order to provide its NT-based web server. In 1998, after careful evaluation of a number of similar products, Global Industries selected DataMirror Transformation Server to facilitate its data distribution initiatives in an e-Business application. Today, to provide the Global Industries web server with the most up-to-the-second information, Transformation Server captures, transforms and flows data bi-directionally between SQL Server and an AS/400 server.

"We viewed ODBC as sluggish and resource intensive," says White. "The decision to go with DataMirror's Transformation Server was based solely on the fact that it could move data to and from a Microsoft SQL Server database and that it used APPC communications native to the AS/400 to get it there. Because Transformation Server is a direct peer-to-peer solution, there was no data staging, programming or gateway technologies required."

The Benefits

Following the implementation of Transformation Server, Global Industries was up and running within two days. Today, the Company replicates more than 2,000 records daily. With the help of the DataMirror solution, Global Industries has also added access to its order status application system and its Parts Master and Inventory Balance file.

Global Industries created an application internally that periodically polls the distribution centers' networks for purchase orders and adds the records to the SQL Server in Marlton. Once the purchase orders are in SQL Server, Transformation Server flows the data to the AS/400, where an order entry clerk edits the information for any errors and automatically transfers the data into the Company's order entry system.

"Transformation Server saved us time in several ways," says White. "We were impressed with the speed at which it replicated our business data and that it had little or no effect on the AS/400's performance. As well, Transformation Server has saved us from re-keying orders, so what used to take hours a day is now done in minutes.

"Another great thing about Transformation Server is that it has been highly flexible since we implemented it," he adds. "In the beginning, we didn't have any set plans as to what we wanted to do with the software in the future. Now, thanks to Transformation Server's real-time data integration capabilities, a growing

number of dealers can check inventory balances and identify part numbers for field repairs and order status."

Conclusions

Global Industries is still not finished with Transformation Server. Future projects planned include creating a business intelligence application by replicating sales information from the AS/400 to a SQL Server data warehouse. This way, sales representatives will have the ability to conduct on-demand reporting.

"The fact that Transformation Server can be used in any number of applications is really advantageous to us," says White. "We save time and resources because we don't have to go through another intensive product search. We can also continue using DataMirror's on-line, e-mail and telephone support services that we have come to rely on and trust. Again, we're conserving energy and resources once wasted on tedious tasks. The fact that Transformation Server has allowed Global Industries to put that newfound energy toward better ensuring customer satisfaction is probably the best reward of all."



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