SELECT COMFORT

USING PROGRESS® DATADIRECT® TO BUILD A BETTER DATA WAREHOUSE

Select Comfort, creator of the Sleep Number® bed and the nation's leading bed retailer, has enjoyed a thriving business in the past few years. With this new business have come new technology challenges. Steve Etzell, Director of Technical Architecture at Select Comfort, is working on resolving these challenges by leading an initiative to overhaul its data warehouse system and streamline its IT infrastructure.

Currently, Select Comfort keeps its business data in "a little of everything," according to Etzell. Its data includes sales figures and customer information from more than 370 retail stores, as well as from its ecommerce channel and direct sales network of telesales representatives and resellers.

The company's existing data warehouse manages basic sales data gathering and metrics reporting. But Select Comfort's financial division wants to get more sophisticated with the data: it has an eye toward an enterprise warehouse that will provide advanced metrics reporting, such as customer analytics, profit analysis, return on investment (ROI), and promotional effectiveness. Etzell estimates that the number of active daily users of this warehouse, exclusive of the retail outlets, will be 150. He and his team are building the new data warehouse on the Linux platform.

Etzell and his team are making this happen by turning to commercial applications when possible, and when necessary, building customized front-end applications, including some Linux ones. They use the Oracle E-Business Suite on Solaris for most of their business applications, including those managing human resources, financial, and manufacturing. They currently use SQL Server for customer and order data, some data cleansing, standardization, and logic on a Windows 2000 server. They plan to eventually convert everything to Oracle. They are already in the process of converting years of historical data into Oracle, and are using Oracle Heterogeneous Services (HS) to accomplish this.

Etzell wanted to use ODBC for accessing his SQL Server and Oracle data from the Solaris applications, and he needed the drivers to support Oracle Heterogeneous Services.

GOAL

Build a sophisticated data warehouse worthy of a thriving, major manufacturing and retail corporation.

WHY THEY SELECTED DATADIRECT

DataDirect Connect for ODBC for Oracle and SQL Server supported the Solaris applications – and allowed the company to take advantage of Oracle Heterogeneous Services.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

DataDirect Connect for ODBC was an "install and forget it" component; Select Comfort's data warehouse development team can focus on the custom-built applications that accomplish their aggressive data warehouse goals.

TECHNICAL BENEFITS

SQL leveling functionality in DataDirect Connect for ODBC future-proofs the data warehouse applications and will make the eventual complete conversion to Oracle simpler and less costly.

He first evaluated iODBC open source drivers. His experience was not altogether positive. When trying to use it with Solaris, Etzell says, "It seemed a little cobbled together. iODBC works well in some other environments, for small businesses. But you have to devote the time to it, and I didn't want to do that."

Etzell didn't want to devote the time to it. He then evaluated Progress® DataDirect Connect® for ODBC. He was already familiar with Progress DataDirect drivers; at a previous company, he had used Intersolv (a former DataDirect company name) connectivity products. He ultimately chose Progress DataDirect's ODBC drivers for their performance and reliability.

In the future, Etzell predicts that his development team will enjoy the benefits of Progress DataDirect Connect for ODBC's SQL leveling functionality. SQL leveling is the capability to write a SQL statement that can be executed across multiple databases, regardless of the databases' SQL implementation. For example, a SQL statement written against Oracle will also be interoperable with SQL Server. Progress DataDirect is the only vendor to provide customers this functionality.

The Progress DataDirect ODBC wire protocol (or clientless) architecture will also make the data warehouse applications easier to maintain, as they do not require any use of the Oracle client libraries. This helps to "future proof" the work that Etzell and his team are doing now. Where an open source ODBC solution would have required extra work to implement and maintain, Progress DataDirect has literally removed a layer of complexity from the new Select Comfort data warehouse project.

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Director of Technical Architecture
Select Comfort

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