Collaboration brings light to complex
SAP IS-U model for leading energy retailer

Specialised services and DSM software for SAP IS-U solves energy retailer's test data challenge

THE CHALLENGE:
A COMPLEX SAP IS-U DATA MODEL

One of the six biggest energy companies in the UK has a very large SAP installation running the Industry solution for Utilities (SAP IS-U). They use IS-U, CRM, MFU, PI and BW products for SAP. Their systems contain significant amounts of personal data for millions of customers. This volume, combined with the complexity of the data model for Utilities with master data and processes spanning the conjoined IS-U and CRM systems, presents very specific challenges.

Working with this volume of data makes it impossible to create full SAP system copies for testing and training. In this case, it meant the quality of the company's data in their non-production systems deteriorated over time.

"The challenges we had before we implemented Data Sync Manager were around the quality and reliability of our test data. It had not been refreshed for several years. It was being manipulated manually to suit certain scenarios. It was very labour and time intensive, and it was prone to errors and inaccuracies."
SAP Solutions Manager, leading British energy retailer

This lack of quality test data meant far too many defects were reaching production undetected. The company uses a release process where projects start many months before their go-live data, and work their way through the non-production landscape in sequence behind other releases. The support effort, along with the cost of finding and fixing issues high up the landscape, was significant. Although the organisation understood the need to catch issues much earlier in the testing, this was very hard to do without accurate test data.

The company looked for a team that could support them in their journey to improve their landscape, and a specialised solution for the SAP IS-U solution which would address four key topics:

- **Data Integrity:**
  Reliable and integrated test data in two SAP IS-U systems and one CRM system per environment.

- **Simplicity:**
  The company "owns" customer data and is responsible for it. This means anything implemented needed to be used as a business function, rather than IT.

- **Reliability:**
  The company works seven days a week, so needed a robust solution. Support is not always available at the times they want to load and use test data, so any chosen solution had to be robust.

- **Compliance:**
  The utilities industry is heavily regulated. This company is subject to strict audits, both from within their wider group and within the industry.

THE SOLUTION:
A COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY

2011: The company needed new training environments for a programme roll-out. Their Systems Integrator suggested using Object Sync from the Data Sync Manager (DSM) product suite to create these environments, so EPI-USE Labs provided cloned test data for the training project. Because of the complexity of the data, EPI-USE Labs developed a custom solution combined with Object Sync to create sets of 200 exact copies of different scenarios needed for training, which could be cloned up by the training team at any time. Due to the unique requirements, this was offered as a service, but enabled the project to be self-sufficient in creating more volume of the variety of datasets.

2011

2012: Following the successful cloning of training data using Object Sync, there was an additional requirement to bring real data from production, and then clone and anonymise the data.

2012

2015: A new DSM project to provide the company with a client slice of data. For industry integration, the retail utilities companies had to provide systems with a significant volume of customer data. Xoserve (an external industry body) requires all gas retail companies to provide testing environments for new systems being implemented which will interface with the retail companies' systems.

The company uses DSM to manage data in their non-production SAP landscape more efficiently, and this project was identified as the first which could use the new data provisioning capability. Client Sync and Data Secure were used to create a new client for the IS-U and CRM systems.

2015

2016: A large project to refresh 15 systems to provide good quality scrambled data throughout their landscape. EPI-USE Labs used the full DSM suite to create and refresh new systems. The data was sliced to save on storage, but still have enough data for testing.

This new client changed how the team worked. They became more agile because developments could be tested before they moved down to the pre-production and production systems. They also now had a good base, and with Object Sync could copy specific data from production to replicate issues and do production support. This system showed the value of updating the larger landscape.

2016

2018: The company leveraged more of Data Secure for improved security in masking test systems. They purchased and implemented the EPI-USE Labs Data Privacy/GDPR compliance suite, with Data Disclose for responding to the significant number of Subject Access Requests a large Utilities company receives, and Data Redact to redact the identity of data for customers who request the Right to be Forgotten.

2018

THE OUTCOME: CONSISTENT, SECURE TEST DATA IN SAP IS-U SYSTEM

Having worked closely with EPI-USE Labs over a number of years, the team at this leading energy retailer appreciates the flexibility and collaboration shown by the company, and their deep understanding of the complex SAP IS-U data model. EPI-USE Labs was able to provide both the required services, and the software, with dedicated development on DSM for SAP IS-U since 2007.

Accurate test data in the system has empowered the business to become more agile. The development team can be held accountable for tested solutions before it moves down the transport path into the production environment.

Complying to regulations and having scrambled data in all the systems was a top priority for the team. The product is also set up so that levels of anonymisation can be varied, meaning no unnecessary overheads to meet their compliance needs.

Having undergone the project to create new systems in the landscape, the company can now manage their own data with minimal support form IT. They use Object Sync to copy the data needed for testing. The business users hit the ground running and no extended training was required.

"The benefits of bringing in DSM were that we could reliably and quickly deliver consistent test data to our systems that weren't manipulated to suit certain test scenarios, and that could meet the criteria we needed without technical intervention. It is actually a tool that is used by the business to deliver their own test data, so they can understand and manage their test data more reliably and more quickly."
SAP Solutions Manager, leading British energy retailer

Key benefits:
- Specialised software in Data Sync Manager for SAP IS-U, along with integrated support
- Highly customisable software is to manage demand and data privacy compliance
- The solution empowered business users to manage their own data, reducing reliance on IT/ Basis teams
- Increased speed; data can be uploaded quickly and reliably

As a global software solutions and managed services company, EPI-USE Labs helps you to maximise the performance, management and security of your SAP® and SAP SuccessFactors systems. Our clients tell us every day how we have transformed their business operations. Contact us to find out how we can help you solve your SAP challenges.

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