



Data Sync Manager™ shows its true mettle in a steel company's integration process.

"DSM has rejuvenated our Dev and Test environments"

This case study is about the experience of a well-known Australian steel company with Data Sync Manager, an SAP landscape management product from EPI-USE Labs. For legal and other reasons we are not able to mention the name of the company in question but, should you be interested in following this report up, please contact us on the address below and we will be happy to give you more details and put you in touch with them. The company has been in existence for more than 130 years and has expanded across the globe to form a network of more than 100 branches employing 17 000 people in 17 countries.

The Steel Company's Challenge

The present market is in a state of flux with both mergers and divestitures happening constantly. For SAP teams continuous divestitures or acquisitions present difficulties with completely new paradigms needing to be conquered.

Since the mid-1990s the steel company has run SAP in various forms, beginning with one 4.6 Environment. Today it has 12 different landscapes, over 70 systems and 15 production systems. "With such a large and diverse landscape Data Management has become a major problem for us" was the comment of the Head of Basis.

Recently the company purchased a series of businesses in the steel sales and distribution space. These align with existing parts of their business running on SAP ERP and CRM. It was thus necessary to integrate the new businesses with the existing SAP solution.

The Obstacles

To protect smaller players in the steel industry, Australia has strict laws governing mergers and, before any integration can happen, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has to review the mergers and sales to ensure the marketplace stays diverse and competitive. Without ACCC approval there would be no data to merge so it was crucial to get this go-ahead.

The first cutover had to be completed by June 2014 but in January 2014 the future was still unclear. The ACCC's final decision and go-ahead came in early March 2014. There were thus two main problems: very tight time frames and poor testing data.

At that time, no production refresh had happened for 6 or 7 years, so the data in the SAP ERP and CRM testing systems was old and unreliable.

At the time the process involved Integration project teams taking large datasets, "massaging" them, and loading them into SAP. This needed many environments to test, rinse and repeat to ensure that the source data and the entire process worked to the standards required.

The company's Basis team had three options: do nothing, work harder or work smarter.

The Solution

1. Doing nothing meant using 5-year old QA systems with unreliable data to compare with trial data in the hope of getting the same result in production. The Basis team knew that the quality of the master data in QA and the lack of data in development would create problems.
2. Working harder meant making multiple copies of a 1.3TB ECC production system for the trial data load testing systems. Logistically, this would need 3 or 4 systems in-play to give the project enough space and a 7-day minimum turnaround for a refresh using 1 basis full-time, each time. Costs would be high, lead times would be long and intense basis resource effort would be required.
3. Working smarter meant looking into testing data replication products.

After reviewing several key data management products and receiving an encouraging recommendation from a highly regarded joint venture operation in a similar field, the company selected EPI-USE Labs' Data Sync Manager.

"Knowing EPI-USE Labs' track record with another company in our industry, we entered discussions confidently – we knew they would be able to help us." Head of Basis

The Outcome

Given that the key issues were poor testing data and limited time, a 3-month time slice of production data was built very quickly into test systems with Client Sync. The numbers are:



This approach increased the existing 500Gb QA system by a mere 150GB, as opposed to the 'work harder option' of taking 7 days minimum to build a full production copy and consuming 1-1.5TB of disk space.

In the weeks following a set of new clients was built to enable the project team to go ahead. These were:

- 3 new Master data-only clients in development for unit/string testing
- 2 new transaction clients in quality system used for mock cutover testing
- 1 new transaction client in quality system to be a training master client

In addition, CRM clients were built to 'match' each of these clients in the related CRM systems. The CRM production system is just under 150GB and it took mere minutes to measure the export and load times for the CRM systems.

All of the above was created over a few weeks with minimal basis team effort.

About EPI-USE Labs

EPI-USE Labs exists to create unique solutions that transform SAP environments, thus improving both efficiency and profitability. Further benefits include time savings, reduced costs and far greater control. To achieve this we have developed a number of advanced software products of which the Data Sync Management suite is one.

If you would like more information on EPI-USE Labs and our products, please visit www.epiuselabs.com or contact us at info@labs.epiuse.com

Benefits

Impressive was the sheer speed of the implementation which enabled deadlines to be met, but the other main benefit was very low storage growth when compared to multiple production copies: 800GB of extra disk space was added to non-production systems for the DEV and test systems, compared to the +4TB that would be required for 3-4 full system copies in disk space alone. The savings all-round are obvious.

There were other unexpected wins:

- existing Functional support staff were not impacted
- existing test/DEV clients remained in use and available throughout
- a boost in confidence in the Basis team, who delivered flexibility to the project team at a time when it was needed.

Conclusion

Data Sync Manager rejuvenated the Dev and Test environments!

"Through the use of Data Sync Manager we have rejuvenated our Dev and Test environments, and ensured the success of the existing project. We have set ourselves up for a better long term BAU environment AND we are well prepared for future acquisition projects which are beginning soon." Head of Basis

What was a manual, resource-intensive process is now automatic and far simpler.

In the years to come integration projects will continue and Client Sync will be a vital part of that. The aim now is to expand into other environments and replace a long-standing mirror refresh process with simpler, regular Client Sync client rebuilds.

An important lesson learnt: Don't manage your data alone, there are technology solutions that help make your project a success.