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Mainframe Data Migration: Data Issues at a Large Multinational

THE PROBLEM

A large multinational with extensive mergers and acquisitions activity required a tool to assist with the data migration projects that occurred after each M&A. While each merger or acquisition brought with it a new and different data migration project, there were some constants: the multinational's inventory management system was in Oracle on a UNIX platform, but the source systems of the companies acquired invariably existed on IBM mainframes. Therefore, each data migration project typically involved a transfer between environments, with the subsequent data quality and data transformation challenges.

Due to a lack of tools, the multinational normally asked the other company's IT department to be responsible for data conversion to match their system. In theory, this made sense. In practice, the multinational would almost always have to get involved in the process, resulting in significant project over-runs and duplication of effort. In many cases, the acquired company would contract with third-parties to handle the data conversion, at significant additional cost. Worse still, since the data conversion process usually took months, many data quality issues would not be found until late in the process, resulting in further delays.

THE SOLUTION

Using Arbutus Analyzer, the multinational was able to tackle the data conversion process directly, thereby taking control of the data migration process. With Analyzer, they were able to:

- improve the quality of the task,
- finish projects on schedule, and
- reduce data migration costs

Because Analyzer could not only access mainframe data directly, it could also provide comprehensive data quality assessments on data from most environments. This was achieved by staging the data onto a machine that had the Arbutus Windows Server installed for analysis and processing. When the demands of the task were beyond their capabilities, they contracted with Arbutus for specialized data conversion expertise.

THE PROCESS

When the multinational began using Analyzer, they had a backlog in data migration projects, and therefore a number of candidates, at various stages of completion, to choose from.

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First, they used Arbutus Migrate on a project nearing completion to verify data files ready for loading into Oracle prepared by an acquired company. Creating the metadata took very little time using Arbutus's Data Definition Wizard expert system. Within days, they were able to not only confirm the quality of the converted data, they identified a significant number of non-critical data quality issues that had been missed.

They then repeated the process with a company at an early stage of the data conversion process, but in this case, they also used Analyzer to read the customer's source data and create files to load into Oracle. Because the Arbutus Data Definition Wizard automatically converted the source system's COBOL copybooks, the metadata for the twenty-five relevant source files for this system were defined and reviewed on the first day, with assistance from on-site Arbutus consultants.

On the second day, both critical and non-critical data quality issues were identified and sent to the acquired company's IT department to be addressed. In the past, only a portion of the non-critical data quality issues would be addressed before the conversion. Using Analyzer, they were able to set up a separate project to correct the remaining data quality issues in their system based on the results of the pre-load data.

They were also able to do a much better job of mapping the source data to their system because they had an opportunity to work with the data at a much earlier stage.

The final step was to create the files to load into Oracle. This involved the creation of a number of procedures within Analyzer to automate the conversion process. The transformations were, by and large, very straightforward, and presented no particular problems. Additionally, these inevitable late-stage project changes had a minimal impact on their conversion process due to the flexibility of the Arbutus technology.

RESULTS

Using Arbutus technology, the multinational was able to perform data migration projects from IBM mainframes and other platforms to their Oracle system on UNIX faster and easier than ever before, and at a fraction of the cost. As well, during the all-important data conversion process prior to migration, data quality testing was much more comprehensive, and performed earlier than in the past, resulting in vastly improved data quality and fewer delays.

To request a free 30-day evaluation of Arbutus Analyzer, please contact us.

"Arbutus has outstanding customer service and technical support. Its delivery is above and beyond any other data analysis software I have used."

*Margie Reinhart,
CEO, Reinhart Forensic Consulting LLC*

"Support by the Arbutus team has been second to none. Often there has been a response time of less than 10 minutes, and they don't mind 'simple' enquiries either. Things are explained in a non-technical manner, which is very helpful."

*Dick Price
S2Mprofits.co.uk*

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