



"I couldn't imagine us writing our own software to do this using our own homegrown utilities. That would be a nightmare."

Bill Sicklesmith, database administrator at Parsons

Business Profile

Company Name:
Parsons Corporation

Headquarters:
Pasadena, California, USA

Industry:
Engineering & Construction

Business Size:
2009 Revenue near \$2.9 billion
12,000 Employees

Business Environment:

- Engineering and construction industry.
- Manages projects in all 50 states of the USA and in 25 countries.
- Key legacy systems including billing, accounts payable, accounts receivable, general ledger, cost reporting and human resources.

Implementation Team:
Vision Solutions and Parsons

Vision Solutions Products:
Replicate1

Critical Issue

After more than 65 years of growth in the engineering and construction industry, Parsons is a leader in many diversified markets with a focus on infrastructure, environmental, and defense/security. Parsons delivers design/design-build, program and construction management, professional services, and innovative alternative delivery solutions to private industrial customers worldwide, as well as to federal, regional, and local government agencies.

With 12,000 employees staffing 4,500 projects across the United States and around the world, Parsons must analyze an enormous volume of data to manage its business effectively and profitably. To maximize the value the company receives from its data, its employees need to be able to access data using familiar tools that make it possible to "slice and dice" the data in innovative, comprehensive ways.

Results

- Parsons' employees use modern tools and familiar platforms to analyze data managed by legacy systems.
- Separating query/reporting processing and production processing leaves operational performance unaffected by analytical functions.
- Vision Replicate1 requires little ongoing administration.
- Duplicating replication schemas for different divisions is fast and easy.

Technologies

Software:

- Vision Replicate1™
- IBM i5/OS® V5R4
- IBM DB2® for i
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003™, 64-bit
- Microsoft SQL Server™ 2005

Hardware:

- AS/400® model 9406-825
- 2 x Dell PowerEdge™ 2950 servers (clustered)

Business Challenge

Parsons' core business applications, which were purchased some years ago from a third-party vendor, are written in RPG and use IBM DB2 for i databases. When the vendor went out of business, Parsons obtained the application source code. Parsons has been maintaining and enhancing the software ever since.

The conundrum was that Parsons' employees want to analyze data using familiar software such as Microsoft Excel and Access, as well as SAP Crystal Reports. In addition, some power-users create their own reports Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services. Providing data in a way that would allow users to employ these tools was a challenge.

It wasn't only end-user query and reporting functions that would have been difficult using IBM DB2 for i-based data. Parsons also has a number of homegrown Microsoft .NET Web-based systems.



REPLICATE1



To resolve these issues, Parsons considered rewriting all of its applications to run on a Windows platform, but the company couldn't cost-justify the millions of dollars that this would require.

Furthermore, converting all of the company's applications wouldn't overcome every challenge. Performing extensive query and reporting against production databases would have hampered operational performance.

Solution

For several years, Parsons used Vision Integrator™ to replicate data from IBM DB2 for i-based production databases to the Microsoft SQL Server databases that are used for query, reporting and Web purposes. In 2007, Vision Solutions acquired Lakeview Technologies. That acquisition brought Replicate1, an even more advanced and flexible data sharing product into the Vision Solutions fold. Consequently, Parsons made the switch to Vision Replicate1.

The conversion to Vision Replicate1 took some time as Parsons has more than 2,000 tables that are replicated from IBM DB2 for i databases to Microsoft SQL Server databases. However, one of Vision Replicate1's features made the job easier. Parsons has several IBM i-based libraries that include identical table layouts for different company divisions. Vision Replicate1's cut-and-paste facility allowed Parsons to define the replication source and target mappings for one of those libraries and then simply copy them for the other libraries.

Before starting the migration, Bill Sicklesmith, database administrator at Parsons, took a one-week course at Vision Solutions. Parsons also contracted the services of a Vision Solutions expert.

"That was a great help," said Sicklesmith. "I would recommend it to anyone who is migrating from Integrator or starting from scratch. That probably saved us a lot of time in the learning curve. Not only was the Vision expert helpful while he was at our office, but he was also available later via email and phone to answer questions."

Sicklesmith also appreciates the help he gets from the Vision Solutions support team. "They are very responsive whenever we have a problem and I have nothing but good things to say about the service I receive from them."

Parsons benefits greatly from the replication provided by Vision Replicate1. "It allows us to put our data in the hands of the users," said Sicklesmith. "We have a lot of people in our finance and engineering groups who want to get their hands on the real data. And they're not afraid to write the code themselves. These people rely on the data that they get replicated to help them make better business decisions."

Summing up, Sicklesmith said, "There is no way we could do our business without replication. And for what we are doing, Replicate1 is definitely the best product out there."



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