Gold Client helps Northrop Grumman create an isolated SAP environment

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Challenge

The One Source Enterprise Solutions Group within Northrop Grumman was assigned the task of creating a new SAP production landscape for an internal customer in a remote location whose data needed to be segregated and protected from unauthorized viewing.

This situation created two major challenges. First, in order to build and test any new landscape, a development team needs to work with current and relevant data. Copying the entire production database into the development and/or quality environment was not an option, the development client needed to be thin yet still have enough production data to support the initial development and testing activity.

The second challenge had to do with the finished landscape. Once the client was put into production it would be moved to a remote location, where the development team would have very limited access it. Compounding the problem was the fact that the remote SAP instance had to interface to the main SAP instance. This meant there was little room for error or opportunity to make post-production fixes and obtaining live production data was critical to the long-term success of the new client.

Individually, both were significant obstacles. Taken together, however, the level of difficulty increased exponentially because the two limitations were at odds with each other. The Northrop Grumman team came to the conclusion that they had to find a solution that would allow them to surgically extract the small amount of key critical data present in the production database – representing one to two percent of a 2 terabyte database – and all the subsequent supporting data in a relatively short timeframe in order to ensure the environments were in sync.

Northrop Grumman considered several solutions including SAP's own TDMS solution as well as a third party solution it purchased years ago. In either case, the tool either was not robust nor flexible enough or required additional hardware to provide such finely-tuned data selection. The team was reluctant to try another tool from an outside vendor and considered moving the data manually, one record at a time. With a two-week window to complete the project quickly approaching, however, that method was ruled out as highly risky. It was decided that despite its reluctance the team needed to broaden its search for a solution that could meet both the strict parameters of the project, the short timeframe, and was repeatable.

Solution

One of the products that Paul Stoltz, Manager, Enterprise Solutions Group Strategy & Support at Northrop Grumman, had investigated previously was Attunity Gold Client Solutions. Attunity was exhibiting this intelligent data transfer tool at SAP TechEd when Stoltz approached them. He presented the challenges and asked if Gold Client Solutions could provide the type of precise data selection required for this highly difficult and

NORTHROP GRUMMAN

About the Customer

Northrop Grumman Corporation is a $32 billion company that specializes in defense and technology products and services for the global market. The company employs more than 120,000 people and has offices and manufacturing facilities throughout the U.S. as well as abroad. Its four core business areas are information and services, electronics, aerospace, and shipbuilding. Some of Northrop Grumman's better-known products are the KC-30 military tanker, the A-10 Thunderbolt support plane, the Virginia-class nuclear attack submarine, and a variety of products for space exploration. In addition, its reach extends into radio frequency identification (RFID), secure voice over IP (VoIP), radar systems, gasoline fuel testing, data center management solutions and a host of other areas.

high priority project. After listening to the parameters and complex requirements, Attunity replied, "Absolutely," and illustrated how Gold Client could replicate master and configuration data as well as a specific subset of key transactional data that would meet all of the requirements set forth in the project. After some discussion and additional planning with other stakeholders on the Northrop Grumman team, it was decided to move ahead with Attunity Gold Client Solutions.

"It became apparent immediately that we had made the right decision," Stoltz says. "Attunity's team arrived on Monday to install Gold Client Solutions. By Tuesday they were identifying and migrating data with our team, and spent the day Wednesday and Thursday confirming and validating that everything was moved and in the proper location in the landscape with full data integrity intact. It was amazing how efficient Gold Client was—it took roughly one hour to move the actual data. Gold Client went into the very complex area from which we needed a specific data set and knocked it out of the park."

One of the features Stoltz most appreciated was Gold Client's ease of use. This was in stark contrast to a similar product Northrop Grumman used previously on other projects. "The other product we'd used required a lot of ABAP development to make it work," he says. "Gold Client was ready virtually out of the box. It was considerably more flexible on everything from Z-tables to data linking, which was important given the very narrow range of data we needed to extract. The other product was also very cryptic about errors. It was difficult to tell what posted and what didn't. In addition, Gold Client creates data packages you can use over and over again, as opposed to the cumbersome methodology of the other tool. The SAP world is very complex. Gold Client is not. It's very straightforward and easy to use."

"The real benefit to us is the ability to use Gold Client to move data into the unit test clients within our Development environment," Stoltz says. "Because of the nature of that environment, development clients have to be very thin. Yet we still expect developers to be able to unit test their code to assure that it will be problem-free when it goes to our QA test and finally production environments. Gold Client allows us to target key data and move it without a lot of effort. In the SAP world that's simply amazing. It's obvious that Attunity knows the SAP data model better than anyone in the industry."

Results

The initial project was completed successfully, with no surprises and on schedule—the new SAP production landscape is working as expected. The Northrop Grumman team was very impressed. After reviewing the completed project, Northrop Grumman's longtime SAP solution architect went from skeptic to declaring that Stoltz should either "deploy the product throughout the enterprise or get Attunity on retainer."

The ripple effect of the project has been a plan to use Gold Client on several other projects and in other areas of the company. One opportunity the team is looking at is in the organization's training environment. Using its previous methodology, refreshing data for training purposes was a manual process that involved taking a copy of the training client, working through errors, and performing some development work each time. It was a six-week procedure that included performing mini mock-conversions to confirm that the project was going to plan. Now, the team estimates it will take about two days defining the specific data subset they want to move, a half day performing the actual move, and a half day confirming the data and setting up the training exercises.

"Gold Client really worked as advertised," Stoltz adds. "The time and resource savings alone will allow Gold Client Solutions to pay for itself almost immediately. It has helped make supporting our SAP development, test, and training environments even easier."

Gold Client Solutions software consists of focused and integrated components, providing powerful features, unique to SAP applications.

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Data Echo® includes the most powerful and flexible methods to transform, synchronize, and copy select data subsets across your SAP landscapes, in the data center or in the cloud.

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Data Recast® supports the unique demands and requirements of SAP Business Warehouse environments and supply chain management software solutions from SAP.

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