



Building a More Intelligent Transportation Network

Con-way Freight Leverages Informatica, MicroStrategy and Netezza to Create High-Efficiency Business Intelligence Solution

FAST FACTS

BUSINESS INITIATIVES

- Optimizing cross dock efficiencies through low latency performance visibility
- Enhancing customer relationship management by empowering drivers through new handheld marketing applications
- Mine business data in company databases and applications to deliver actionable intelligence to decision makers throughout the company
- Modernize IT infrastructure to create a unified and consistent data architecture that multiple teams can use

TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

Implement the Informatica Platform in combination with a Netezza data warehouse and MicroStrategy BI solution to create a high-efficiency, scalable framework for analyzing and delivering enterprise data.

“One of the keys to successfully building Con-way’s business intelligence solution was adopting a consistent, scalable data integration platform that can be leveraged across the business to improve operations. Informatica proved to be the ideal choice for that role.”

— Scot Lambert, senior manager of business intelligence, Enterprise Business Intelligence Group,
Con-way Freight

Harnessing Enterprise Data

Based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Con-way Freight is a global transportation leader that combines the resources of more than 20,000 professionals, decades of experience, and financial stability to create competitive advantage for its customers. On any given day, the company’s fleet of more than 9,000 tractors and 25,000 trailers bearing the blue Con-way Freight logo crisscrosses North America in precisely orchestrated patterns that simultaneously optimize delivery efficiencies and reduce fuel consumption.

Con-way’s sophisticated transportation operations also demand precise movement of information between the company’s databases and nearly a hundred applications that help coordinate the company’s essential business activities—everything from scheduling and tracking freight deliveries to managing sales, marketing, and HR programs. A few years ago, the company saw a huge opportunity in harnessing all that information, so it launched a strategic business initiative with the aim of mining its data repositories and delivering on demand information and analysis to executives.

“The goal was to enable managers to ask virtually any question about the data and get answers at many levels of granularity,” says Scot Lambert, senior manager of business intelligence in Con-way’s Enterprise Business Intelligence Group.

BENEFITS

- Reduced OPEX through more efficient and effective cross dock operations
- Future benefits of improved customer loyalty and margin expansion by empowering drivers to cross-sell/up-sell services
- Replaced outdated data-propagation tool and hand-scripted programming methods with an automated data integration platform
- Reduced data integration development time by 20 percent
- Increased business flexibility by gaining access to widely available pool of data integration development professionals

NUTS AND BOLTS

- Solution: Data Integration, Business Intelligence and Data Warehouse
- Products: Informatica PowerCenter® and Informatica PowerExchange®
- Services: Informatica Professional Services
- Sources: Mainframe and client-server databases and applications
- Target: 4 Terabyte Netezza enterprise data warehouse and legacy operational data store
- Users – 3,000 Business users of MicroStrategy BI

Infrastructure Modernization Initiative

To achieve that objective, however, Con-way would need to modernize its IT infrastructure. In short order, the company developed plans to build an enterprise data warehouse based on Netezza technology and a state-of-the-art business intelligence (BI) platform from MicroStrategy. But with data sources ranging from IBM databases on mainframes to Oracle applications on UNIX servers, the company's IT managers faced a daunting task in establishing and maintaining efficient, high-quality data feeds to the business intelligence platform.

Engineers had previously relied on a combination of hand-coded programming and an aging data propagation tool to manage the flow of data into an existing operational data store (ODS), an information repository used by the company's core freight-management applications. However, these methods were slow and inefficient, lacking such capabilities as reusable objects and easily copied design patterns, which can boost developer productivity. "It could take four to five days to set up one table, and then we would have to redo the entire process again when we moved into production," says Roopali Doshi, technical lead for Con-way's Enterprise Business Intelligence Group.

The Informatica Advantage

As Con-way searched for a replacement for its legacy ODS data integration environment, the BI team saw an opportunity for leveraging new technology to feed the data warehouse and BI platform as well. "We decided that we would find an enterprise solution to address several closely related infrastructure needs, creating a consistent, single data integration method that could be leveraged across the company," Scot explains.

Informatica emerged as the clear choice for Con-way for a variety of reasons, including the software's automated data mapping capabilities, its ease of use and administration, and the ready availability of professionals knowledgeable about the Informatica® Platform. "One of the advantages with Informatica is that it's an industry standard solution," says Doshi. "Resources are easily available in the market, and we have a greater chance of finding an employee or contractor with real platform experience."

Feeding Business Intelligence

Today, with the help of technology partners Informatica, MicroStrategy, and Netezza, Con-way has put actionable intelligence into the hands of key decision-makers throughout the organization. The company is steadily replacing the legacy data feeds to its ODS with Informatica-based mappings, and it has started pulling data into its data warehouse from multiple sources using Informatica's automated and scalable data integration platform. "We can develop these flows 20 percent faster with Informatica," Doshi says.

One of the most important and valuable business benefits for Con-way is the better management of its massive cross-dock operations at the company's Freight Assembly Centers (FACs). The ability to move freight via forklift to the right truck in an efficient, cost-effective manner is a key differentiator; for example, Con-way can offer a 3-day shipment compared to the typical 5-day delivery guarantee from competitors. To optimize operations, Con-way has built a BI solution that helps shift managers track team performance much closer to real-time; managers can now get updates during a shift of many activities to ensure the team is meeting its daily goals. The ability to track worker performance enables managers to fix problems—such as workers who need additional training, or workers who are not performing their functions diligently—as they occur.

Enhanced Customer Interaction

Con-way is leveraging the MicroStrategy BI platform, coupled with the recent rollout of hand-held devices to drivers, to rethink the way they interact with their customers. Most Con-way customers still use paper bills of lading to manage orders and accept shipments; however, Con-way is working with customers to streamline their back-office processes through applications delivered to the handhelds. The second wave of applications will be even more strategic: Con-way is currently identifying additional ways to leverage the MicroStrategy BI platform to communicate promotional marketing offers to the drivers, enhancing their effectiveness as sales representatives and potentially up-sell or cross-sell supplementary services. As an example, Con-way will be able to offer customer discounts based on order size to even out capacity variability, improving both margins and customer loyalty.

Furthermore, using solutions from Informatica, MicroStrategy and Netezza, Con-way is gaining valuable insights into how customers and prospects respond to special promotional events that the company hosts throughout the year. By gathering and transforming relevant data points from its operational data store, the company can determine the extent to which attendance at these events translates into actual business deals. “We built this subject area from scratch and did the data propagation using Informatica,” Doshi says. “Here again, Informatica saved us a significant amount of development time.”

Informatica also plays a key role in helping Con-way pull together an array of data from legacy databases and applications to respond to requests for proposal (RFPs) from major customers. “Informatica makes it a lot easier to assemble these pieces of information,” Lambert says. Executives also hope to leverage the BI platform to discover ways to streamline the RFP process and even redesign how the company sets prices. Eventually, the bulk of Conway's data integration architecture will be built and maintained using Informatica technology, enabling the company to quickly integrate enterprise data across the company.

Learn More

Learn more about the Informatica Platform. Visit us at www.informatica.com or call +1 650-385-5000 (1-800-653-3871 in the U.S.).

About Informatica

Informatica Corporation (NASDAQ: INFA) is the world's number one independent provider of data integration software. Organizations around the world rely on Informatica to gain a competitive advantage with timely, relevant and trustworthy data for their top business imperatives. Worldwide, over 4,440 enterprises depend on Informatica for data integration, data quality and big data solutions to access, integrate and trust their information assets residing on-premise and in the Cloud. For more information, call +1 650-385-5000 (1-800-653-3871 in the U.S.), or visit www.informatica.com. Connect with Informatica at <http://www.facebook.com/InformaticaCorporation>, <http://www.linkedin.com/company/informatica> and <http://twitter.com/InformaticaCorp>.



Worldwide Headquarters, 100 Cardinal Way, Redwood City, CA 94063, USA
phone: 650.385.5000 fax: 650.385.5500 toll-free in the US: 1.800.653.3871 www.informatica.com

© 2011 Informatica Corporation. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A. Informatica, the Informatica logo, and The Data Integration Company are trademarks or registered trademarks of Informatica Corporation in the United States and in jurisdictions throughout the world. All other company and product names may be trade names or trademarks of their respective owners. First Published: September 2011