



Monster.com Relies on Informatica to Maximize Value in Force.com Investment

CHALLENGE

Create a simple-to-use information environment that gives business executives fast access to key customer data presented in ways that can easily be understood

SOLUTION

Informatica On Demand Data Loader Service for Salesforce CRM

BENEFITS

- No reliance on formal IT staff for loading and integrating data
- Automated scheduling of Informatica jobs allows business users to use salesforce.com to generate reports on external data loaded overnight
- Solution works with a cloud-hosted application (salesforce.com / Force.com) to increase efficiency by allowing end users to work anywhere, at any time, without losing control of their data
- End users select, report on, and analyze financial and marketing data via the familiar salesforce.com interface without requiring help from IT, significantly improving productivity

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— Rich Gottesman, Salesforce CRM Administrator, Monster.com

When college students need part-time, internship, or entry-level work, MonsterTRAK gives them the tools to find it. A division of online career search behemoth Monster.com, MonsterTRAK connects more than one million students and new graduates to job listings and career advice, both directly and through hundreds of college and university career centers.

Employers use MonsterTRAK to post openings, track applicants, and screen members' resumes to proactively spot potential candidates. Job hunters visit the site to post their resumes, search current job openings, and apply for the positions that catch their interest. As both groups interact with the MonsterTRAK site, back-end applications gather data—including the number and types of jobs employers' post, how much they pay for listings, which sales representatives assist them, which jobs draw the most views and applications, and information about the source and length of page views. This data is aggregated nightly and the data sets stored in an Oracle-based datamart called TrakMart, hosted at the Monster.com's affiliate in Los Angeles, California.

The Challenge

Job, employer, and applicant data is critical to MonsterTRAK's ability to set its rates, drive traffic to the site, and generate revenue. The company's top financial and marketing managers must crunch the data each day for information, such as which types of job postings sell best, which employers have outstanding balances, and which sales representatives are top performers. These details not only help the company manage its web site and cash flow, they also drive strategic decisions about product offerings, pricing, special promotions, and staffing.

Previously though, MonsterTRAK struggled to generate this critical business intelligence. With no reporting module for its Oracle system, the process of making the contents of the datamart understandable was slow and cumbersome. Business users had to request specific reports—for example, a breakdown of currently active employers by size, location, and industry—from the database administrators (DBAs) in IT. When they had time, the DBAs queried the Oracle database and pulled the results into Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheets that often included thousands of rows of unaggregated data. The DBAs then emailed the spreadsheets to the business users, leaving it to them to sort the results, create pivot tables, and otherwise make sense of it themselves. Yet without the technical knowledge to find or use analytic and reporting tools, executives allowed the spreadsheets to sit in the executive's email inboxes or stack up in printed form until they could persuade a DBA to help them interpret the data.

This inefficient process created hours of extra work for the already busy DBAs and weeks of delays in turning raw data into actionable reports. Most critically, it led to a business-wide lack of insight into customer service, billing, and overall website performance. MonsterTRAK urgently needed a solution that would help its marketing and finance executives make more timely business decisions based on comprehensive, up-to-date information, while also freeing the IT staff for more strategic projects.

The Solution

Like many companies, MonsterTRAK is experimenting with 'cloud computing' as a way to take advantage of the cost savings and economies of scale of hosted infrastructure. In particular, the company adopted the Force.com platform-as-a-service (PaaS) offering from salesforce.com several years ago in its telesales and online advertising departments, using its easy-to-build dashboards to help non-technical employees track their performance while saving the expense of maintaining in-house reporting tools.

The company realized that the familiar salesforce.com interface would also allow top financial and marketing executives to manipulate customer data in complex ways without special technical knowledge. Earlier this year, system analyst Rich Gottesman, Monster.com's sole Force.com architect and administrator, took on the challenge of moving MonsterTRAK's data from the Oracle TrakMart into Force.com on a reliable daily basis, while still ensuring that the data remained readily accessible and under MonsterTRAK's control.

Gottesman discovered he could easily use the Force.com reporting system to build custom objects to meet MonsterTRAK's reporting needs, but moving the company's data from its Oracle-based datamart to the Force.com PaaS proved more complicated. He first tried the free Apex Data Loader provided by salesforce.com, but quickly discovered that it did not include a built-in scheduling function. Moreover, the fact that it was unable to complete any data transformations or allow formulas of any kind made it a very limited option. In addition, he said, the money saved by using freeware was balanced out by the potential costs of fixing problems in a solution with no support.

Then Gottesman attended a salesforce.com event, where he saw a demonstration of the **Informatica® On Demand Data Loader Service for Salesforce CRM™** that focused on the very features he needed most: the ability to manipulate data before loading it, and a simple point-and-click scheduler. "We'd heard of Informatica, of course, but we thought it was just for huge integrations," he says. "The on-demand version was made for jobs our size, with support from Informatica—and when they showed me in just 15 minutes how to pull any data set from anywhere into Force.com, I immediately volunteered MonsterTRAK as a beta customer."

The set-up wizards and help function built into the Informatica On Demand Data Loader Service for Salesforce CRM allowed Gottesman to completely import the data sets from TrakMart into Force.com in less than a month. This was after devoting only a couple days to building the first data mapping job successfully and showing off the results (and subsequent reports and dashboards) to the business users. Because the Data Loader Service allows data transformations and filtering directly in the data mapping module, he was able to transform data, merge fields, and test the results using a small sample of rows before uploading the full tables. Simultaneously, he was able to retain an up-to-date local copy of the database at all times for continuity. It took Gottesman less than a couple weeks to build meaningful reports and dashboards in Force.com to meet end users' requests as it pertained to this TrakMart data. This was despite the fact he was busy occupied by other IT projects and salesforce.com administration and support.

The Results

Today, the Informatica On Demand Data Loader Service for Salesforce CRM automatically loads each day's data into Force.com on a pre-set evening schedule: first employer data, then financial and job data, starting at 4:30 a.m. Eastern time and continuing in 30-minute intervals until 9 a.m. If a row of data fails (for example, if a job record points to a nonexistent employer record), the Data Loader Service logs the error and sends Gottesman email alerts (detailing both success rows and failure rows) so he can check and correct it in the morning. "It helps that our business users are on the West Coast, as I am on the East Coast and that means I can address and fix any problem data long before they step into their offices in the morning," Gottesman added. The reports and dashboards he created not only graphically show the aggregated data, but also highlight the date of the last data import. This way he and the business users can immediately discern whether the previous night's run took place and that the most recent data is being shown.

The process is virtually invisible to MonsterTRAK's executives, who are based in Los Angeles. By the time they arrive at their desks each morning, the previous day's data is loaded, processed, and ready to access through their Force.com dashboards—a far cry from the days or weeks they once waited for DBAs to help them make sense of fast-aging information. "It was a great day when we told the DBAs they could stop emailing spreadsheets around," Gottesman recalled, something that was in his data integration project plan. "Something so simple in concept, was liberating to our busy DBA group." With initial reporting tools in place, Gottesman is now using Force.com as a coding-free development platform to create more detailed analytics and dashboards for end users. "I don't have time to work with the data, so being able to move and use the data without digging into the intricacies of syntax is a huge benefit," he says.

Just as importantly, he says, the Data Loader Service lets him manage this torrent of daily data singlehandedly, a fact which has made a big impression on both the MonsterTRAK IT group and MonsterTRAK's management team. In fact, Gottesman calculates that the Data Loader Service actually has a negative total cost of ownership: it gives business users faster access to necessary data, lets the company squeeze more value out of its existing investment in Force.com, and turns a process that once required multiple IT staffers into one supported by just one tenth of one person's time—all for an annual subscription fee that amounts to just a fraction of a DBA's annual salary.

"Perhaps the greatest benefit to this project is that our business users are seeing complex data from an external system coupled with data from their Sales application (salesforce.com) without any real knowledge of the moving parts in the background. Business users shouldn't have to worry about where the data is coming from, how it gets there, or the internal framework to make it happen. The Informatica On Demand Data Loader for Salesforce CRM is the key tool that made this data integration possible, and I see many more projects that can take advantage of Informatica On Demand down the road."

He continues, "The Informatica On Demand Data Loader Service for Salesforce CRM lets us retain control of our own data while making the most of the benefits of SaaS and the Force.com PaaS, such as lower costs and easy access to data from anywhere at any time. I think the future of computing is cloud-based, and Informatica On Demand is helping us get there."

NUTS AND BOLTS

- Data integration: Informatica On Demand
- Source: Data gathered via the MonsterTRAK online production application and aggregated via stored procedures, then stored in an Oracle-based datamart
- Target: salesforce.com

LEARN MORE

Learn more about the Informatica On Demand Data Loader Service for Salesforce CRM and other Informatica On Demand offerings. Visit us at www.InformaticaOnDemand.com or call 888.345.4639 to learn more.

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Informatica enables organizations to gain a competitive advantage in today's global information economy by empowering them to access, integrate, and trust all their information assets. As the independent data integration leader, Informatica has a proven track record of success helping the world's leading companies leverage all their information assets to grow revenues, improve profitability, and increase customer loyalty.



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

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