



Full Steam Ahead:

Railinc Fast-tracks Railway Operations using Self-service Data



"We see strong demand for Informatica Enterprise Data Catalog from business users, with steady growth in usage driven by easy visibility and understanding with self-service."

Shawn Petway,
Senior Business Analyst, Railinc

Goals

Provide business users with easier search and discovery of interline rail data in a diverse, distributed environment

Increase users' confidence in the data by providing greater visibility into its end-to-end lineage

Improve rail data quality and automatically capture data changes in critical systems as they occur

Solution

Use Informatica Enterprise Data Catalog to index metadata and add business context to rail data

Discover not only where data resides, but how it moves, building lineage for each individual attribute

Standardize and deduplicate interline rail data with Informatica Data Quality and use PowerExchange Change Data Capture to automatically capture changes

Results

Gives business users a better experience with self-service interline rail data discovery while decreasing reliance on IT

Builds users' confidence in data by displaying end-to-end lineage all the way back to when data was first created

Delivers accurate, trusted, and timely rail data to the business by automating data quality and change data capture

Business Requirements:

- Use a simple, intuitive search interface for enhanced usability
- Collaboration among business and IT teams for near real-time data delivery
- Scale to 100+ metadata resources with room to grow as the business expands

About Railinc

Based in Cary, North Carolina, Railinc serves the North American freight railroad industry, providing innovative and reliable resources for rail data, IT, and information services.



Informatica Success Story: Railinc

Railinc is a for-profit subsidiary of the Association of American Railroads, providing data, software, and messaging services to the North American freight railroad industry. From equipment information and health management of freight cars, locomotives, and end-of-train devices to rail-car tracking and electronic data interchange (EDI) services, Railinc provides essential IT services, many of which are required by railroad operating regulations.

To provide the best possible service to its railroad customers, Railinc's business users need fast access to trusted data. However, with critical transportation data distributed across Oracle applications, a Hadoop data lake, and various analytics tools, business users were increasingly challenged to find and understand the data they needed. With no clear view of the data landscape, business users often had to rely on the IT team to access rail data and understand its lineage. This often resulted in business users receiving inconsistent information, which could impact business decisions.

With data distributed across so many internal systems and much of it duplicated, Railinc needed a way to catalog all its rail data assets and add business context to the data to enable easy search and discovery. The company also wanted to improve business users' confidence in the data by providing visibility into how datasets were initially created, along with business descriptions and tags to provide additional business context. Additionally, it wanted to improve data quality at the source and automatically capture data changes in critical systems, such as Oracle, as they occur.

"We wanted to evolve our data platform and empower our business users to satisfy all their data needs through self-service," says Chad Boos, Director, Infrastructure Technology & Operations at Railinc. "To accomplish this, we needed to move away from dependencies on individual knowledge, application-specific wiki pages, and data silos, and create an intelligent, enterprise-wide data catalog."

Building a user-friendly, AI-powered data catalog

Railinc embarked on a major initiative to address this problem, bringing in users from both business and IT to determine the best toolset to build, maintain, and grow the new data catalog. The company evaluated solutions from several vendors, including Informatica Enterprise Data Catalog (EDC).

"We found that other metadata management solutions had very limited functionality compared to Informatica Enterprise Data Catalog," says Cathy Herb, Director Central Services at Railinc. "EDC offered the best user interface by far, with intuitive search. It was also much easier to import the data."



"People in our organization were always trying to figure out where the trusted data is supposed to be, and who to ask if they needed clarification. Informatica Enterprise Data Catalog helped us solve that problem."

Ana Maria

Senior Manager Reporting and Analytics,
Railinc

Railinc uses Informatica Enterprise Data Catalog to index metadata and add business context, building an end-to-end lineage for each individual data attribute. EDC automatically discovers the technical metadata from within Oracle application systems, ETL tools such as Informatica PowerCenter, and business intelligence environments such as SAS. Built-in AI capabilities leverage machine learning to enhance catalog automation and efficiency over time.

Railinc is complementing EDC by using Informatica Data Quality to standardize and deduplicate data, as well as PowerExchange Change Data Capture to capture changes in multiple environments as they occur. Currently, the company is scanning 45 metadata resources with EDC, and expects to scale well past 100.

"We see strong demand for Informatica Enterprise Data Catalog from business users, with steady growth in usage driven by easy visibility and understanding with self-service," says Shawn Petway, Senior Business Analyst at Railinc. "It's been a great experience. The stability of Informatica is the best on the market."

Streamlining data access with self-service discovery

By providing self-service data discovery, Railinc gives business users a better experience while decreasing their reliance on IT. The company is also building users' confidence in rail data by displaying end-to-end lineage all the way back to when data was first created. By automating data quality and change data capture, Railinc can deliver accurate data to business users without overwhelming its IT team.

"Using Enterprise Data Catalog, our business users and data scientists can easily search for data they need and quickly determine if the data resides in Oracle or Hadoop, for example," says Petway. "The overall usability and ease of self-service for business users are what drove us toward Informatica."

IT can now collaborate with business stakeholders to add business context to data via descriptions and tagging to enable easier search and discovery. Business users can check if relevant data is already available and reach out to the correct data owners and stewards if they have questions.

"People in our organization were always trying to figure out where the trusted data resided, and who to ask if they needed clarification," says Ana Maria, Senior Manager Reporting and Analytics at Railinc. "Informatica Enterprise Data Catalog helped us solve that problem."





Inside The Solution:

- Informatica Enterprise Data Catalog
- Informatica Data Quality
- Informatica PowerCenter
- Informatica PowerExchange Change Data Capture

Improving Railinc Data Visibility

With fast access to trusted data, Railinc can improve its business processes and analytics to help railroads and railroad equipment owners in providing trusted and consistent data sets.

“Railroads are very complicated systems, with many different representations of even a single data attribute,” says Ramesh Veerappan, Data Platform Architect at Railinc. “With Enterprise Data Catalog, we have a single version of the truth that allows business users to clearly understand exactly what data attributes and entities mean, and have the confidence that the data is correct. It’s important to Railinc to stay on the leading edge of technology, and Informatica is helping us provide better service to our railroad customers.”

Digital transformation is changing our world. As the leader in enterprise cloud data management, we’re prepared to help you intelligently lead the way. To provide you with the foresight to become more agile, realize new growth opportunities or even invent new things. We invite you to explore all that Informatica has to offer—and unleash the power of data to drive your next intelligent disruption. Not just once, but again and again.

Informatica Worldwide Headquarters

2100 Seaport Blvd, Redwood City, CA 94063, USA

Phone: 650.385.5000 | Fax: 650.385.5500 | Toll-free in the US: 1.800.653.3871

informatica.com | facebook.com/InformaticaLLC | linkedin.com/company/informatica | twitter.com/Informatica

© Copyright Informatica LLC 2019. Informatica, the Informatica logo, and PowerCenter are trademarks or registered trademarks of Informatica LLC in the United States and many jurisdictions throughout the world. A current list of Informatica trademarks is available on the web at informatica.com/trademarks.html. Other company and product names may be trade names or trademarks of their respective owners. The information in this documentation is subject to change without notice and provided “AS IS” without warranty of any kind, express or implied.

