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Case Study: HealthNow Implements A Data Services Layer Using Informatica 9 Platform

by Noel Yuhanna

with Mike Gilpin and Adam Knoll

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today, most organizations face growing data integration challenges due to increased data volume, complex data types, and an increased business need for real-time data. Information-as-a-service (IaaS) offers a next-generation data integration platform that speeds integration in these complex scenarios. HealthNow New York implemented such a unified data integration platform to address many data integration use cases while advancing its service-oriented architecture (SOA) strategy. Using Informatica Platform for Data Services version 9, HealthNow was able to develop new data services and speed access to customer and risk data in legacy systems and thousands of local databases. HealthNow's experience shows that using an IaaS platform such as Informatica 9 can dramatically reduce integration effort and help the business be more agile and responsive through faster access to critical data.

SITUATION: HEALTHNOW FACES GROWING DATA ISSUES TO SUPPORT NEW REQUIREMENTS

HealthNow New York is a leading healthcare company in Western New York that has offered healthcare services to companies and individual since 1936. Today, it has more than 815,000 members, 13,000 client companies, and 2,100 employees, with 2008 revenue of more than \$2.27 billion. With critical data spread across 16 enterprise databases including IBM DB2, SQL Server, and Sybase, plus more than 30,000 Microsoft Access databases and data marts, HealthNow was struggling to deliver consistent, timely, and trusted data to applications and users:

- **Application developers found it challenging to access complex data.** Key applications had to tap five data sources to process up to 30,000 health insurance claims per day, bringing significant data integration, performance, and security challenges.
- **Business users could not quickly obtain the analytics they needed.** HealthNow needed months to create customer and product data extracts for pricing and risk analysis as well as many months to add new attributes across multiple sources.

To overcome these challenges, HealthNow decided to revise its data management strategy to build a virtualized data layer. HealthNow wanted to implement a unified data integration environment that would support its range of data integration use cases and its SOA strategy while speeding the delivery of data, lowering operational costs, and becoming more agile in response to business change.



Headquarters

Forrester Research, Inc., 400 Technology Square, Cambridge, MA 02139 USA
Tel: +1 617.613.6000 • Fax: +1 617.613.5000 • www.forrester.com

SOLUTION: HEALTHNOW LEVERAGES INFORMATICA 9 TO DELIVER TRUSTED DATA SERVICES

HealthNow evaluated several vendors, including Composite Software and IBM, before choosing the Informatica Platform for Data Services version 9. With Informatica, HealthNow was able to accelerate delivery of new business-critical healthcare data from months to days. It was able to speed both enterprise data analysis and creation of a data-services-based virtualization layer, perform complex data transformation with minimal effort, and deliver quality real-time data to various consuming applications, users, and processes. As a result, business users can now quickly and reliably access plan rate information from a single data service. In addition, HealthNow is now more agile in adapting to new healthcare trends and legislation. With Informatica 9, HealthNow is able to:

- **Deliver a single version of the truth.** Previously, applications had to touch five or more data sources to get claims information, which could be inconsistent or incomplete. With Informatica, HealthNow delivers for all claims a single version of the truth that's centralized, consistent, and secure.
- **Improve business-IT collaboration.** One of Informatica 9's key strengths is its ability to involve business analysts early in the process via role-based interfaces that support interactive business-IT collaboration. Unlike a developer-centric approach to data services development, this *business-driven* approach relies more on business-IT collaboration, especially to handle urgent business requirements. Empowering analysts to directly access, model, and profile their data means they can own the data and leave the governance to IT.
- **Reduce cost and minimize risk.** Improving developers' productivity by using Informatica's data services automation helped reduce costs by requiring fewer developers to create and manage data services compared with the number required to create integration code. Also, by eliminating many Microsoft Access databases and gaining better control of data access, HealthNow was able to minimize security risk.
- **Deploy applications and respond to new requirements more quickly.** With Informatica, HealthNow is building a more flexible, SOA-based data integration architecture that can adapt more quickly to evolving healthcare legislation and trends. HealthNow can now deploy new data-consuming applications in days instead of months. It can also respond to new analytics requirements more quickly, delivering new data services in hours instead of weeks or months.

Informatica Delivers A Data Services Platform That's Easy To Implement

Informatica 9 has experienced rapid uptake; more than 22% of active customer projects have upgraded since its release in November 2009. Key themes for this release include SOA-based data services, pervasive data quality, and business-IT collaboration. As a result, enterprises are using Informatica in large implementations across multiple industries, including healthcare, high-tech manufacturing,

financial services, energy, pharmaceutical, and public sector. Informatica has expanded beyond its traditional emphasis on data movement and data integration to add greater support for data services, making them simpler to deploy yet able to scale across enterprise data sources and applications. Informatica Platform for Data Services version 9 speeds delivery of data for both business intelligence and transactional applications, providing a single version of the truth, comprehensive data governance and compliance controls, and improved data quality. Key features include:

- **A comprehensive data services platform.** Informatica Platform for Data Services version 9 delivers a comprehensive data services platform that's integrated across all critical components, including data access, data profiling, data quality, data transformation, data security, data caching, and data availability.
- **Role-based collaboration.** Informatica Platform for Data Services version 9 offers the ability to deliver role-based user interfaces that target different IT roles such as business analysts, enterprise architects, data architects, developers, and warehouse analysts, leveraging common metadata and shared logical data objects for iterative business-IT collaboration and data governance.
- **ETL-like transformation.** Informatica Platform for Data Services version 9 builds in complex data transformation capabilities similar to extract, transform, and load (ETL) transformation. Analysts can specify all transformations using a point-and-click interface without writing code.
- **Real-time data quality analysis.** Traditional batch-oriented data quality processes are too slow for data services, especially when dealing with real-time data. Informatica Platform for Data Services version 9 delivers on-the-fly data quality features that validate, cleanse, and enrich mashed-up data in real time without the need for staging.

Next Step: Access To All Data Using Data Services, Eliminating Direct Access To Sources

HealthNow plans to increase its data agility across more business applications and data sources. It will also prepare for rapid response to healthcare reform and other legislation by providing self-service enterprisewide data services access. By creating a data fabric layer that becomes the central point of all data interactions, eliminating direct access to data sources, HealthNow will deliver high-quality information in real time in a secure manner. HealthNow plans to use Informatica Platform for Data Services to evolve all data sources and applications to this common data access layer, including the ability to write updates back to the data services layer for critical applications. The firm is already using the product to augment its master data management (MDM) architecture with operational data as well as to support its enterprisewide operational business intelligence strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INFORMATION-AS-A-SERVICE SHOULD BE PART OF YOUR DATA INTEGRATION STRATEGY

Information-as-a-service products can do more than simply federate multiple data sources; they can provide a data services platform to support many use cases such as “single version of the truth,” enterprise search, and real-time analytics. Informatica offers a viable data services platform that data analysts can use to quickly create services in a cost-effective manner across the enterprise. Besides Informatica, other solutions that can help build data services frameworks include Composite Information Server, Denodo Enterprise Data Services Platform, and IBM InfoSphere Information Server.¹ Architects considering implementing a data services platform should begin by integrating five to 10 applications while keeping a broader enterprisewide data services architecture focus.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Forrester evaluated information-as-a-service (IaaS) offerings across 123 criteria and found that IBM, Informatica, Composite Software, and Denodo Technologies led the pack. See the February 10, 2010, “[The Forrester Wave™: Information-As-A-Service, Q1 2010](#)” report.