

Priority Health Implements Operational Data Store for Critical Health Plan Information

Commentary by Keith Sederholm, DBA Team Leader, Priority Health

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Formed in 1992, Priority Health (www.priority-health.com) is a Michigan managed care company. The company has grown rapidly and formed a series of mergers with other HMOs. Whereas just seven years ago Priority Health covered less than 100,000 lives, today the company has offices in Grand Rapids, Holland and Traverse City, Michigan and now covers more than 300,000 lives.

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The Problem

Priority Health's plan data, including member, claims, provider and financial records, resides in a Sybase database running on an HP-UX N-Class 6-Way Server. The company utilizes Facets™, a client/server claims processing application developed by Erisco, Inc. to manage this insurance claims data. To off-load query and reporting activities from the production server and maximize operational efficiency, Priority Health wanted its entire transaction history to be captured from the production Sybase database and flowed into an Oracle operational data store

on another HP-UX N-Class Server. Because all its development and reporting tools are Oracle-based, Priority Health wanted to leverage its use of current in-house tools and Oracle expertise. To help integrate its Sybase and Oracle environments, Priority Health began to search for a real-time, multi-platform data integration tool.

Priority Health processes more than 300 critical data transactions per second during peak processing loads and the company expects its database to grow from approximately 100 gigabytes to over 300 gigabytes in the near future. In the past, Priority Health had been successful at developing in-house tools for data extract, transform and load operations in a batch mode. However, they wanted to implement a new claims processing application that would use Sybase, necessitating the need to get the data from Sybase to the Oracle data warehouse and an Oracle-based real-time reporting environment.

Priority Health wanted to capture, transform and flow this information into the Oracle operational data store so that historical transactions could be stored and easily accessed for reporting and ancillary applications including web-enabled applications. The solution would need to transform the data on-the-fly and flow more than 700 tables in real-time between the production environment and the operational data store.

The Solution

Because Priority Health is a rapidly expanding company, it wanted to implement a scalable, flexible and forward-thinking solution that would accommodate future mergers or changes in the company's platform or

database environment. It sought a software solution that would allow the company to utilize existing tools and technology and that could grow with the company. Priority Health also searched for a solution that was easy to implement and required no programming changes to its existing databases.

Priority Health chose to implement DataMirror Transformation Server for several reasons. "The two biggest aspects that impressed us about Transformation Server were its performance and simplicity", says Keith Sederholm, DBA Team Leader, Priority Health. "It was quite easy to implement because of its plug-and-play features. As well, the DataMirror sales team was knowledgeable and confident and product support, both on-line and over the phone, was quite helpful whenever we needed it."

Transformation Server is a flexible, scalable, high performance peer-to-peer data integration solution that enables Priority Health to capture, transform and flow data in real-time throughout their business. With Transformation Server, Priority Health has the capability to deliver absolutely current and up-to-the-minute information for business intelligence and real-time analytics. Powerful data transformation on-the-fly ensures that the operational data store is populated with clean data in a format conducive to query and analysis.

Prior to choosing DataMirror Transformation Server, Priority Health used a combination of custom-developed batch solutions and various integration software packages to periodically move data across their multi-platform environment.

"The custom developed solutions were generally not flexible and required a great deal of maintenance. The integration

software packages presented issues with performance, scalability and complexity. As well, these products were generally difficult to manage and offered little support for data-type conversion", explains Keith Sederholm. "We wanted an out-of-the-box solution that was easy to use and configure while allowing us to efficiently manage our data across multiple heterogeneous databases. After investigating a number of solutions and downloading a trial version of the software for evaluation, we realized DataMirror Transformation Server was the ideal solution."

The Benefits

Because Transformation Server is easy-to-implement and requires no programming changes to applications or databases, Priority Health expects to realize a rapid and substantial return on their software investment. There is no need to allocate time and resources to developers in order to get the integration solution up and running and Priority Health is able to continue using their in-house applications, tools and expertise without the need for costly re-coding or training on new tools.

"Because of Transformation Server's ability to deliver real-time data from Sybase to Oracle, we anticipate that approximately 250 in-house employees and decision makers will access the integrated data via various query and analysis tools, while many others will access the data via the web," says Sederholm.

By implementing Transformation Server, Priority Health's diverse technologies can coexist while the data is kept current, synchronized and secure.

Conclusions

Knowing the urgency and importance of the data they possess, Priority Health has been able to ensure that critical data is accessible and available in real-time with Transformation Server. With the DataMirror solution, the company's IT organization can continue to use their existing tools and Oracle expertise. The ability to seamlessly and transparently integrate their data between Sybase and Oracle has allowed them to build an effective solution without interfering with general business operations.

Ultimately the company expects that the new Oracle operational data store, replenished in real-time by Transformation Server, will enable the company to centralize health plans data. This will enable Priority Health to gain significant efficiencies over a non-centralized model because all information can be accessed from one single point of truth, lowering administrative costs and increasing their ability to provide customers with the very best service.



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