

Real-time business intelligence gives Mitchell Grocery food for thought

Commentary by Doug Masters,
IS Director, Mitchell Grocery Corporation

INDUSTRY

RETAIL/WHOLESALE

BUSINESS APPLICATION

DATA WAREHOUSING



Mitchell Grocery Corporation is a wholesale grocery operation, supplying a complete line of food products to approximately 300 independent retail stores in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Mississippi. The Company receives and ships out an average of 50 to 60 truckloads of product each day. Purchase orders are electronically transmitted to their suppliers through electronic data interchange (EDI) and invoicing from those suppliers is received through the same media. Mitchell Grocery is located in Northeast Alabama, with approximately 450 employees including a programming staff of six people.

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The Problem

Mitchell Grocery’s computing environment consists of R.F. Communications units, which scan

incoming product to their warehouse. The product ordering process originates on the Company’s IBM iSeries (AS/400) computer and is downloaded to one of their NT SQL Servers. Once there, the incoming product is scanned and recorded. On completion of any given purchase order, the data is sent back to the AS/400. The inventory is then updated and accounting functions take place.

“Before we found a solution, someone had to stop what they were doing to do a manual download from the iSeries to the NT SQL Server, and then manually upload the completed data back to the AS/400,” says Doug Masters, IS Director of Mitchell Grocery Corporation. “Having someone available and knowledgeable in how to do this at all times was a problem.”

The Solution

Once the need for a solution became apparent, Mitchell Grocery began searching for a data warehousing tool. After careful deliberation and testing, the Company selected DataMirror Transformation Server to enable the continuous flow of product data in real-time between its AS/400 and NT servers. “The obvious reason for using a product like DataMirror’s was to do the job that it is doing,” says Masters. “We were originally advised to use

a particular 'like product' from a different vendor, but after several months, neither we nor the vendor could get their product installed and functioning on our servers. The Transformation Server solution was relatively easy to install and configure."

Today, the DataMirror solution runs on an IBM AS/400 model 500 and a Dell Poweredge 4300 NT SQL Server running Microsoft SQL Server 7.0. Once the data is replicated in real-time to the target NT server, Mitchell Grocery uses the data for various business applications, reporting and analysis.

"The product is running on both servers and is running extremely well," adds Masters. "In fact, it is transparent to us. We don't have to do anything to move the product data between our AS/400 and the NT Server."

Conclusions

Masters remains positive about Mitchell Grocery's experience with Transformation Server.

"The DataMirror product allows us to run our production systems smoothly, contributing to a well-maintained and efficient ordering system," he says.

"The support team has been very helpful during and after the installation, but we have not needed that much assistance since its implementation. That's the best part about Transformation Server. The fact that it's reliable ensures that we can maintain our daily development routine without any delays. We know that we can count on DataMirror support should there be a disruption to our computing environment."



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