



BUSINESS SOFTWARE HEAVYWEIGHT

One of the world's leading software and IT services companies, SunGard provides software and processing solutions for financial services, higher education, and the public sector. A leading software and IT company, SunGard serves more than 25,000 customers in more than 70 countries, including the world's 25 largest financial services companies. SunGard has been recognized as the third largest provider of business applications software after Oracle and SAP.

SunGard Public Sector markets to organizations serving the public, consisting of organizations such as city and county governments, law enforcement and courts, and public safety services.

DATABASE ACCESS IN HYBRID .NET ENVIRONMENT

The Local Government Division of SunGard Public Sector recognized that an opportunity existed in offering a solution that would provide single cohesive entities for people, properties, and/or organizations across the separate but interrelated market sectors served by the division.

"The idea was for ONESolution to present a unified front focusing on those three supporting pillars of local government," explains Don Bates, Director of Product Management at SunGard, "that is, the people served by each jurisdiction, the land it governs, and the organizations that are often paying taxes and allowing it to run."

ONESolution was envisioned as the flagship product for the Public Sector, capable of supplanting a variety of other software portfolios in the various markets served by the different Public Sector divisions. It would consist of a .NET technology stack on a Microsoft platform, employing Microsoft's Data Access Application Block (DAAB) pattern, which is the right approach for using different database vendors for the same business solution.

"A critical goal for us was for our solution to be database agnostic," Bates says. "SunGard sought to protect the investment our customers had previously made in us in terms of hardware platforms."

While the .NET stack typically employs SQL Server as its database platform, SunGard's largest existing customer base was running SunGard software solutions on IBM iSeries with a DB2 database platform. The company planned to maintain its existing product profile while giving customers using those products the option of adopting ONESolution.

"We wanted to position ourselves to best mitigate risks in terms of database connectivity, extraction and connections."

SUNGARD®

CHALLENGE

Give customers choice of database/hardware platform for latest flagship product.

SOLUTION

Progress® DataDirect® Connect® for ADO.NET—the only solution offering 100% managed ADO.NET connectivity to multiple and non-SQL Server databases

BENEFITS

Expanded market presence for new product; cost-effective adoption—without prohibitive overhaul of hardware platforms; development staff free to focus on customer rather than database connectivity issues

MANAGED .NET ACCESS TO MULTIPLE DATABASES

The Local Government development team initially sought to use the DB2 native drivers for connecting ONESolution to that database, coupled with a DAAB extraction layer the team wrote to mitigate some of the more volatile aspects of database connectivity. But this was not the best approach for SunGard's plan to support multiple databases.

"We didn't want to maintain and continue to write version-specific code with respect to various databases," Bates says. "We also didn't want to have to maintain that middleware on an ongoing basis."

Bates relates that, because maintaining and optimizing databases and extracting data is not SunGard's core competency. Having one technology partner specializing in connectivity to whatever database was in use appealed to the team.

"If we could rely on a business partner for that," he notes, "we could focus on our domain expertise—that is, city and county governments and how they operate."

Microsoft representatives working with SunGard recommended Progress DataDirect as connectivity solutions for a broad variety of databases from a single vendor. Progress® DataDirect® Connect® for ADO.NET drivers provides the only solutions for connectivity with SQL Server or DB2 databases that are 100 percent managed, meaning that they operate entirely within the .NET runtime environment and fully leverage all the performance- and security-enhancing features of the latest .NET 3.0 Framework.

"We had some of our application engineers run some tests on the DataDirect solution," Bates says. "Connecting, executing, and extracting data from the database matched the performance of our in-house implementation for SQL Server and exceeded it for DB2."

THE RESULTS: A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC FOCUS

Several conference calls ensued to negotiate contract terms for using DataDirect technology in ONESolution as well as in additional SunGard offerings.

"Working with Progress DataDirect was from the onset extremely pleasant," Bates reports. "Every time its representatives visited us, the dialogue was completely transparent. When we needed responses, they were there. It made the decision much easier."

Constructing, authoring, and maintaining a data abstraction layer are not easy; Bates points out that, without the DataDirect solution, the Public Sector team would have had to allocate a senior member to the task.

"Keeping our most seasoned engineers involved with the issues specific to the customers we serve certainly translates to a savings for us," he says. "Our not having to write, maintain, and optimize data connectivity and extraction lets us focus on city and county governments and how they operate."

Serving those customers is, of course, the primary objective. Existing SunGard customers now have the option to take advantage of ONESolution on the database platform that they currently have in place—thus leveraging their current database expertise as well as their current investment in hardware and software.

"IT directors hearing that the ONESolution is .NET-based say to us 'I'd like to go with your solution but I can't afford to acquire all new hardware to replace my iSeries,'" Bates says. "And we tell them: 'you don't have to.'"

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*Don Bates
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PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global software company that simplifies the development, deployment and management of business applications on-premise or in the cloud, on any platform or device, to any data source, with enhanced performance, minimal IT complexity and low total cost of ownership.

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